

FE Week

FE 'WILL PAY' FOR TOUGHER GCSE 'PASS'

PAGE 2



SELF-IMPOSED SCRUTINY FOR OFSTED

PAGE 3



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PAGE 8



IT'S FESTIVAL TIME

Hundreds of teachers and tutors descended upon the grand setting of Berkshire's Wellington College for two days of classroom-related talk, debate and fun.

Among the speakers were university technical colleges boss and former Education Secretary Lord Baker and Gazelle chief executive Fintan Donohue.

They took part in a number debates and panel sessions and are featured inside on page 7, where Lord Baker outlines his views as to why apprenticeships should not be for those aged more than 25.

The page is dedicated to two of day one's events, also featuring Mr Donohue's views on the level of entrepreneurial know-how among college boards, which were expressed in a panel session hosted by Association of Colleges deputy chief executive Gill Clipson.

GOVERNMENT MAKING 'DOG'S BREAKFAST' OF APPRENTICESHIPS

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The government is making a "dog's breakfast" of apprenticeships by making providers wait until after next month's Budget before learning if they'll get paid for provision already carried out, Shadow Minister for Young People John Woodcock has said.

In an exclusive interview with *FE Week*, he said the block on the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) telling providers the outcome of their quarter three growth requests was "needlessly creating problems".

The uncertainty over whether providers will be funded for apprenticeships already started, as revealed by *FE Week* a fortnight ago, has forced providers to stop taking on learners for the programme.

It is likely the government's target of 3m

apprenticeship starts by the end of this Parliament will be hit, and some have even warned of having to lay off staff in the wait for news until after Chancellor George Osborne's July 8 Budget.

Mr Woodcock said: "It is clear colleges and independent learning providers across the country are reeling from the decision to just out of the blue rearrange their budget — and they're doing their best to provide the education and opportunities that the young people coming through rely on but they're at sea at the moment.

"The government does have a real responsibility to put back some stability into the system or it is going to create damage beyond even the scale of the cuts it has already committed to make."

He added that Labour had "a critically important role to try to help hold government to

account as it is making the decisions like the dog's breakfast that has been made over the growth requests".

He said: "It is crazy and it is needlessly creating problems and difficulties for providers to deliver the service that they do and are passionate about."

The delay in announcing whether providers would receive extra cash for over-delivery of apprenticeships and traineeships — seen as key areas for the government — follows an announcement by Mr Osborne that he wanted to see in-year savings of £450m each from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Department for Education, with FE earmarked for cuts.

However Skills Minister Nick Boles told MPs that the £900m of cuts would not all fall on the sector.

Apprenticeships were protected in

this year's budget allocation, which saw swingeing cuts of up to 24 per cent for all non-apprenticeship funding.

The SFA declined to comment on Mr Woodcock's remarks, repeating the statement that was made when *FE Week* first reported the growth funding announcement delay. An SFA spokesperson said it was "to ensure in-year funding is considered in line with government's wider financial position". She added: "So far, in the 2014 to 2015 funding year, we have fully funded credible growth requests at performance points one and two, recycling £50m funds into apprenticeships and traineeships."

Mr Boles declined to respond to Mr Woodcock's comments.

See page 12 for coverage of the FE Week meet the new Shadow Minister event

Editor's comment page 8

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NEWS

CONSERVATIVES ‘U-TURN’ OVER ENFORCED APPRENTICESHIPS

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The Conservatives have been accused of making an “apparent U-turn” over enforced apprentice recruitment.

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) plans to make public bodies such as schools, hospitals and prisons take on apprentices were announced on Sunday, June 14.

But it comes after Conservative MPs opposed previous Labour proposals for enforced targets on apprenticeship recruitment.

Shadow Skills Minister Liam Byrne said: “Labour has long led calls for public procurement to be better used to boost apprenticeship opportunities. Sadly, ministers have blocked and opposed our plans at every turn. To see the government make an apparent U-turn is certainly welcome.”

Nevertheless, the policy will help ministers meet the target of 3m apprentice starts over the course of this Parliament, which was a central plank of the Conservative Party manifesto before they were elected on May 7.

A BIS spokesperson told *FE Week* “the level of the targets is still to be set.”

He said: “These will be stretching and will be based on analysis of the number of staff in the public bodies and the scope for further growth in apprenticeships.”

They came with plans for apprenticeships to be given equal legal protection as degrees to allowing a clampdown on firms misusing the term. The plans are all set to be introduced to Parliament in the autumn as part of the government’s new enterprise bill.

But in March 2013 Conservatives voted down Labour proposals to require companies receiving a government contract worth more than £1m to provide “apprenticeship opportunities”.

When asked, during a separate debate that month in the House of Commons, if he backed the idea, former Skills Minster Matthew Hancock said “opportunities for the provision of apprenticeships” were only considered “on an individual basis”. Mr Hancock also dismissed former Labour leader Ed Miliband’s plan, announced in September 2013, to force companies to train a “local” apprentice for every foreign worker they took on — branding them “illegal” under European Union law.

However, the BIS spokesperson said that the government’s recruitment plan was “on public bodies being set targets to take on more apprentices, not on public procurement contracts, which is a separate issue”.

Martin Doel, chief executive of the Association of Colleges, said: “We understand why the government sets targets, but they must ensure that the quality of apprenticeships does not suffer.”

Stewart Segal, chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP), said: “Although we are not convinced about having hard targets because employers should be recruiting apprentices for positive reasons, AELP has always maintained that the public sector should be doing more in offering apprenticeships.”

Mr Hancock and the Conservative Party declined to comment.

See page 20 for an expert piece on the apprenticeship plans by David Harbourne

FE to pay for tougher numerical GCSE pass rates

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Further education providers have been warned they could be left with a bill for greater numbers of compulsory English and maths learners as the new numbered GCSE grades regime makes it harder to achieve a pass.

Under a condition of Department for Education (DfE) funding, providers must make 16 to 19 learners who have not achieved at least a C in English or maths resit until they pass.

But the current system’s C grade is partially the equivalent of a four under the new system and that won’t be enough for a ‘pass’.

It has prompted warnings of even more 16 to 19 English and maths learners who must continue to study to get the more difficult ‘pass’ grade.

Indeed, research by *FE Week* sister newspaper Schools Week has discovered around two thirds of learners who achieved a C grade for maths and English GCSE last summer would be considered to not have passed under the new system — where five will be the lowest

possible pass (with nine being the best).

James Kewin (pictured below left), deputy chief executive of the Sixth Form Colleges Association, said: “Making the maths and English GCSEs harder to pass will mean colleges having to find the resources to teach the subjects to a lot more young people post-16.

“It’s going to be a case of FE having to pick up the pieces for failures with teaching in schools.”

However, a DfE spokesperson said FE providers would, up to the end of 2018/19, only have to teach maths and English to 16 to 19 learners who hadn’t reached grade four, to give “time to adjust”.

Education Secretary Nicky Morgan (pictured front) announced on June 15 that five would be a “good pass” under the new GCSE grading system.

And Ofqual has indicated that a grade five would only be awarded to the top third of pupils achieving the current C grade — so learners who previously achieved a middle or low C would have got a level four, and so not passed.

Catherine Sezen (pictured right), senior policy manager

FE WEEK NEWS IN BRIEF

Barnfield progress

Barnfield College is making “reasonable progress” in four out of six key areas — but progress remains “insufficient” in the other two.

In its second monitoring visit following January’s inadequate rating, Ofsted said the college was improving learner management and teaching, learning and assessment, among others. But teaching and learning of English and maths in discrete classes and within subjects, and arrangements for work experience were still concerns.

Principal Tim Eyton-Jones said: “Much more needs to be done.”

SFA cycle calendar

The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) has produced a business cycle calendar that sets out “key milestones” up to April next year.

It is designed to help colleges, other training organisations, direct grant employers and Local Enterprise Partnerships plan ahead.

It contains events such as statistical first releases, the issuing of reconciliation statements and the expected communication of the 2016 to 2017 final allocations.

The three-page document is available on the SFA section of the gov.uk website.

Apprentice data due

The third quarter statistical first release is due out on Thursday (June 25).

Featuring key information such as the number of apprenticeship and traineeship starts, it is due out at around 9.30am.

It will contain provisional data for the three months from February. This time last year it showed the first third quarter year-on-year rise in 16 to 18 apprenticeship starts, with 18,400, since 2010/11. It also there had been 7,400 traineeship starts since the programme was launched in August 2013, up until April 2014.

for 14 to 19 and curriculum at the Association of Colleges, said: “What’s particularly concerning is the plans to align the new GCSE good pass with the 16 to 19 English and maths funding condition for colleges.

“While this will be a phased approach, the detrimental effect this could have on college funding is worrying.”

Dr Lynne Sedgmore, executive director of the 157 Group, said: “This announcement will undoubtedly add to the well documented challenges that colleges are facing in implementing policy around English and maths.”

The Schools Week research, which focused on learners who sat GCSEs last summer only, showed that 27.3 per cent of learner grades were C for English— but under the new numerical grading rules, only a third of these (9.1 per cent) would have achieved a grade five.

In maths, 30.4 per cent of students received a C grade. However, Schools Week found that only a third of these (10 per cent) would have received a grade five.

The DfE spokesperson said: “From 2019/20, we intend to align the funding condition with the new good pass at grade five”.



Ofsted gets scrutiny boards after ‘transparency’ criticism

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New regional scrutiny committees will consider complaints about Ofsted from September as the education watchdog acts to address transparency criticisms.

The eight bodies, each made up of an Ofsted official not involved in inspections along with an “external” provider leader put forward by “appropriate national representative bodies”, will rule on internal reviews of complaints about inspection.

The news comes almost 18 months after the watchdog’s complaints system was branded “utterly pointless” by Dame Jackie Fisher, who famously threw inspectors out of Newcastle College in 2012 when she was its chief executive. It also comes after *FE Week* revealed last year that of 35 formal complaints from September 2012 to mid-November 2013, 13 were upheld and at least one produced a significant uplift of grades from ‘requires improvement’.

The committees will form part of a new common inspection framework (Cif) spanning FE, schools and early years from September. And the handbook for new Cif, which comes just under three years after the current Cif was introduced, was launched at an event in Westminster on Monday.

Ofsted chief inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw

CURRENT CIF	NEW CIF
Overall effectiveness	Overall effectiveness
Outcomes for learners	Effectiveness of leadership and management
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Quality of teaching, learning and assessment
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Personal development, behaviour and welfare
	Outcomes for learners

(pictured below left), speaking at the event, said: “I intend to set up a high-level scrutiny committee in each of Ofsted’s regions, made up of HMI and senior education practitioners not involved in carrying out inspections for Ofsted. They will assess and rule on the internal reviews of complaints about inspection. Their decision will be binding on Ofsted.”

It was exclusively revealed in *FE Week* in August last year that the education watchdog planned for inspections to be “harmonised” under one Cif. Ofsted’s resulting eight-week consultation on the unified Cif plans, entitled Better inspection for all, closed before Christmas and its subsequent report on almost 5,000 responses indicated broad support.

Gill Clipson (pictured below), deputy chief executive of the Association of Colleges (AoC), said she was “pleased” to hear about the assumption during

short inspections that good colleges remained good. She added: “Too often we hear from colleges that inspection teams begin from a negative hypothesis which is dispiriting to say the least. We are also pleased to see the Ofsted complaints procedure is to be made transparent as this is something AoC has long been calling for.”

Stewart Segal (pictured below right), Association of Employment and Learning Providers chief executive, said: “While we are generally content with the direction of travel Ofsted has taken over the new Cif, we have expressed concern at the short timetable for its introduction, especially as the current framework has only been in place for two years. Providers’ preparation has not been helped by the fact the Ofsted handbook has only just appeared so we need to understand how some of the new elements

in the framework such as the application of the Prevent strategy and the delivery of English and maths will be judged. We need to ensure Ofsted recognise the differences as to how those policies apply to learners that are employed, such as apprentices.”

He added: “The establishment of regional scrutiny committees is a very welcome step. For independent providers, for whom a grade four can automatically mean a loss of contract and hence the possible closure of the business, having this new avenue of appeal is a very sensible reform. We are pleased we will be involved in ensuring those panels are fair, open and transparent.”

The new Cif handbook further sets out a plan to give the assessment of learners’ welfare, behaviour and personal development more sway over the outcome of inspections of providers from September. During the new inspections, judgements will be made on each major type of provision, including study programmes, apprenticeships, traineeships, adult learning programmes, high needs provision and full-time 14 to 16 provision. But inspectors will no longer make judgements on specific subject areas.

Ofsted will also launch new short inspections — as short as two days — for providers previously rated good, conducted on the assumption the institution under scrutiny remains good.

See page 20 for an expert piece on the new Cif by ex-Ofsted inspector Phil Hutton



Chartered Status body wins sector support but role questions remain

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Further education leaders have thrown their support behind FE Chartered Status after it was approved by the Queen.

The Privy Council announced on June 11 that the Queen had approved the granting of a Royal Charter to the Institution for Further Education (IFE).

It had been launched in 2013 by Lord Lingfield to pave the way for a new chartered membership organisation for high-performing FE providers.

Stewart Segal, chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP), told *FE Week* that “IFE’s objectives to promote and celebrate professionalism in our sector will support the work that AELP and other representative groups have been doing in the sector for many years”.

“Any initiative that supports this drive is very welcome,” he said.

David Hughes, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education chief executive, said: “The Royal Charter is an important step forward for the FE sector, which needs and deserves more recognition. Now the hard work begins.

“The IFE must truly represent the best of the FE sector, in terms of quality,

innovation and integrity as the sector confronts one of its most challenging times in its history.

“I’d particularly like to see it recognise the unique mission of post-compulsory FE to support the development of a truly lifelong learning society. FE does this by working with employers, providers and individuals to help people of all backgrounds, ages and circumstances to engage in learning, improve their skills, support business growth and get on in life.”

Gill Clipson, deputy chief executive of the Association of Colleges, said: “We look forward to working with the IFE to understand how it will work and the benefits it could bring to our members,” she added.

“Clearly a lot of work has been going on to achieve this status and our congratulations go to the organisation.”

It comes after concerns emerged in April that FE Chartered Status plans had “stalled”.

Plans, originally drawn up by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) for the Royal seal of approval to be granted to high-achieving FE institutions, were first revealed in July 2012.

But after confirming this month that Royal assent had been granted, Lord Lingfield said: “The new institution will give the sector its first ever chartered body.

“It will be part of the work of driving forward professionalism in FE, celebrating and building on what we do well, and bringing together the best performing organisations to take that work further.”

DISABLED LEARNERS LOBBY MPS OVER LACK OF COLLEGE CHOICE

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Young people with learning and physical disabilities and their families gathered outside the Houses of Parliament to demand the right to choose an FE college that best suits their needs.

They brandished banners and wore T-shirts emblazoned with the “Right Not a Fight” slogan of a nationwide campaign being waged by the Association of National Specialist Colleges (Natspec).

It took place on Thursday (June 18) — two days after the University and College Union led a protest at Westminster against FE funding cuts.

The Natspec campaign was launched a year ago, just before the introduction of The Children & Families Act that promised greater choice to suitable colleges.

The special educational needs and disability code of practice also says that “the aspirations for children and young people will be raised through an increased focus on life outcomes, including employment and greater independence”.

But a Natspec spokesperson said: “There’s a growing void between the act, the code and reality.

“Young people and their families were highlighting issues about the number of hurdles they have to jump to get into to the college they wish to attend — the lack of



Pic: Carl Hewlett/TWM

impartial information, advice and guidance, the endless assessments with people who often have very little understanding of their needs, and delays throughout the system.”

A survey, carried out this year by National Star College for people with physical and learning disabilities, in Cheltenham, found that out of more than 1,600 families questioned, 80 per cent had only been given information on options run by their local authority.

Meanwhile, 30 per cent had been actively stopped or discouraged from finding out about other options and 87 per cent said they had no idea how local authorities were making decisions about their child’s future.

Kathryn Rudd, principal of National Star College and chair of the Association of National Specialist Colleges, said: “Young people don’t believe they should have to fight for months to get into the college that best meets their needs and ambition.”

Principals, chief executives and brick

BY FE WEEK REPORTER
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More than 20 FE and skills-related figures were among the 1,163 people to have received an award in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours List.

City and Islington College principal and chair of the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (Cavtl) Frank McLoughlin was chief among these with a knighthood.

The remaining awards were made up of five CBEs, 11 OBEs, seven MBEs and a BEM (British Empire Medal).

Six of these (including Sir Frank) went to college principals or chief executives, one went to a governor, another to a head of student life, another to a bricklaying tutor and one to a former college higher education manager.

There was also recognition for skills provision outside the college environment with Cumbria-based independent learning provider Gen2 Training chief executive Mike Smith picking up an OBE.

Further skills honours for the business world came for Rotherham engineering firm Newburgh Engineering chair and managing director Vincent Middleton with an OBE, while South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) chair, Helena Kennedy Foundation chair and founder and former principal of Milton Keynes and Cambridge Regional colleges Ann Limb received a CBE.

Stewart Segal, chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, said: "It's good to see that a wide range of people across the sector have received awards.

"In the independent sector, Mike Smith's championing of skills training in the North West has been fantastic and his OBE is richly deserved. We hope to see more independent providers recognised in future honours lists.

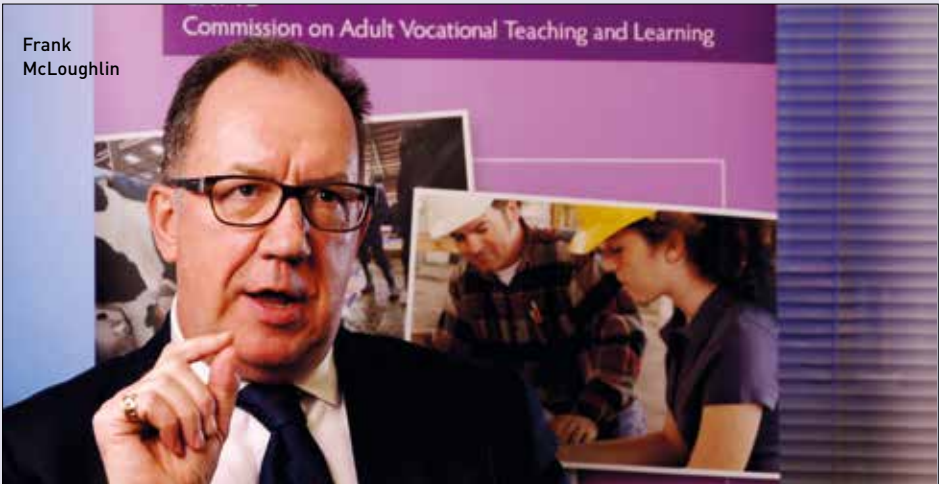
"We have worked closely with Ann Limb in the development of skills and employment within the sector so we are equally pleased about her CBE. And we were pleased to be part of the Cavtl initiative and therefore we are delighted about the knighthood for Frank McLoughlin."

Martin Doel, Association of Colleges chief executive, said: "Congratulations to all our FE sector colleagues, but most particularly to those in our member colleges whose tireless work has been recognised.

"Every year principals, governors and other staff are rewarded for their dedication to FE and we are pleased to see such a number again this year."

Dr Lynne Sedgmore CBE, executive director of the 157 Group, said: "We offer our congratulations to all those who have been honoured for the important work they do in FE and skills, which has enormous value for individual learners, employers, the economy and society."

Visit feweek.co.uk for more Birthday Honours coverage



Sir Frank tops FE list

City and Islington College principal and chair of the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (Cavtl) Frank McLoughlin was given a knighthood in the Queen's 2015 Birthday honours list.

Mr McLoughlin's award came as official recognition for his services to FE having been City and Islington principal since July 2002.

In 2012 he was appointed Cavtl. Its findings, taken on by the Education and Training Foundation, were published in

March 2013 and included proposals for a national centre for a National Vocational Education and Training (VET) Centre.

Mr McLoughlin said: "Receiving this honour is, most importantly, further recognition of the work City and Islington College undertakes to enable young people and adults to learn, thrive and succeed."

He added: "I believe the honour also recognises the wider impact of Cavtl, which I chaired in 2013, and the critical importance of the FE sector as a whole."

CBEs — FIN



Two years after his hard-hitting review recommended around 95 per cent of the adult vocational market's 19,000-plus qualifications could be axed under radical proposals to "de-clutter the system," and BAE group managing director Nigel Whitehead has been honoured with a CBE.

It came as recognition for his services to vocational education and skills with his further involvement in the sector coming in the form of a commissioner's post at the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) since 2009.

"I am delighted to have been awarded a

OBEs — 'unfailing support for youngsters' ea

Having "unfailingly supported young people in land-based education" for nearly four decades, Plumpton College principal Des Lambert has been given an OBE.

His services to land-based education and young people earned him the honour and he said: "I am delighted and proud to receive this honour. Helping young people learn and develop their careers is one of the most privileged and satisfying of occupations and to do this in an area encompassing all that goes on in the land-based industries and the countryside is most rewarding. The award reflects the hard work of all of the college staff."

Fellow principal Shelagh Legrave was honoured with an OBE for services to FE just over a year after leading her 14,500-learner Chichester College to an outstanding Ofsted

rating, as was National Extension College chief executive Ros Morpeth.

"I believe I was nominated because of coming out of retirement in 2010 determined to secure the future of the NEC and preserve the legacy of the flagship organisation of its founder, the social entrepreneur Michael Young," said Dr Morpeth, who turned around the fortunes of the ailing long-distance learning provider that she had left after 27 years in 2003.

Meanwhile, former Association of Colleges deputy chief executive Lesley Davies, vice president for quality, standards and research at Pearson, was awarded an OBE for services to education.

Her career in education spans 25 years, working first as a teacher and manager in general FE before moving into inspection

and policy development with organisations including the Learning and Skills Council.

"I am thrilled, and a little shocked, to receive this incredible honour — I can't imagine having worked in anything but education for the past 25 years," she said.

Gen2 Training chief executive Mike Smith picked up an OBE for services to skills training and voluntary service in Cumbria.

"I'm obviously delighted not just for the recognition of my services to FE but also for the community in Cumbria," he said.

"It goes without saying that it's a great honour and a privileged to be have been recognised in this way especially as a leader of an independent training organisation. It's not only recognition for myself but for Gen2 and all of its staff, without whose dedicated support and professionalism over the years,

none of my achievements would have been possible."

Newburgh Engineering chair and managing director Vincent Middleton was another FE-related



Des Lambert



Ros Morpeth



Lesley Davies



Mike Smith



Vincent Middleton

Playing tutor honoured by the Queen

VE FE AND SKILLS FIGURES RECOGNISED



Peter Roberts

CBE,” he said. “In my work at BAE Systems and at the UKCES, I’m fortunate to see at first hand the benefits business and society at large gains from having a well-trained and qualified workforce.”

Another CBE headed for Leeds City College principal Peter Roberts, for services to FE, as he prepares for retirement at the end of the summer.

“Having worked in education for 37 years and in the FE sector for 32 years, I am both delighted and humbled to be recognised in the Queen’s Birthday Honours List,” he said.

“It is only fitting that I pay tribute and



Ann Limb

dedicate this award to all those who have helped, guided and supported me along the way. In particular, this includes my family, friends and all colleagues in the sector with whom it has been a privilege to work over this period of time.”

And Dr Ann Limb’s political service earned her a CBE, too. She has worked with former Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg when he was an MEP, and was an independent member of the Education Committee of David Cameron’s Public Services Improvement Policy Group, among other politics-related roles.



Heather McGregor

“Being nominated for two gongs in four years feels like an extravagance - and I’m thinking of it as an upgrade to business class,” said Dr Limb, who was awarded an OBE in the 2011 Queen’s Birthday Honours for public service and for services to education.

“However, the organisations, businesses, and charities to which I give my time are thrilled that I’ve got another ‘badge’ — particularly The Scout Association where in September I shall be invested as their first woman chair in its history.”

A further FE and skills-related CBE were given to Christina Potter, principal of Dundee

and Angus College, for services to education.

She has been the college principal for two years having previously been principal of Dundee College (before merger) for six years and principal of Elmwood College, in Fife, for a decade before that.

She told *FE Week*: “I’m stunned. It’s very special.”

Dr Heather McGregor was another OBE recipient, for services to business, especially employment skills and diversity in the workplace. She has been chair for four years of the Career Ready charity which works with 16 to 18-year-olds to help them become ready for employment and was a board member there for six years previously.

She is also a Financial Times columnist, who writes under the name of Miss Money Penny, and also founder of the Taylor Bennett Foundation, which helps black and ethnic minority graduates get jobs in the communications industry.

“I am absolutely delighted — I feel that this honour isn’t for me, I couldn’t have done any of this without the support of literally dozens and dozens of people,” she said. “The real honour has been being a colleague of so many wonderful different people.”

arns Des award

OBE recipient, for services to advanced manufacturing skills training.

“I was a bit gobsmacked, really. I think it’s a very nice thing to have, that recognition, but I know I now it’s a recognition of a lot of people and a lot of effort put in across the South Yorkshire region,” he said.

And Judy Lowe’s services to the construction industry, particularly women in construction, earned her an OBE.

The former Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) deputy chair told *FE Week*: “Young people are seeing construction for what it is now, not what it was 20 years ago.”

Skills for Care executive Sharon Allen was awarded an OBE for services to social care, homeless people and housing and long-serving board member Brian Walsh, executive director of People at Coventry City Council, was awarded an OBE for services to social care.

Services to the development of cyber skills saw Judy Susan Baker, founder and former chair of Cyber Security Challenge UK, awarded an OBE, as was Emer Marie Murnaghan, head of business improvement at Graham Construction, for services to the civil engineering profession and FE in Northern Ireland.

MBEs — ANDREW CEMENTS PLACE IN HONOURS

The work of Manchester College tutor Andrew Dennis in teaching prisoners the art of bricklaying saw him honoured with an MBE.

“I enjoy seeing the change in people,” he said. “Many of the men we work with have low self-esteem and confidence, but practical skills provide them with the opportunity to progress. Prison makes people insular so I actively encourage teamwork and mentoring.”

An MBE is also heading the way of East Riding College’s long-serving, and 83-year-old, governor Alex Denholm for services to FE. He was a governor at the college for 22 years, much of the time as vice chairman.

“I was surprised and I feel proud for the college. I put a lot of work in for the college but I also got a lot out of it,” he said.

Having stepped down as a governor this year, Mr Denholm continues his involvement with the college as a fellow and having been co-opted onto the governors’ audit committee.

Another long service example that led to an MBE was Loughborough College’s former head of higher education Eric Macintyre. He retired last summer after

37 years working for the college.

“I am, of course, personally delighted to have been honoured in this way, but I regard the award as being on behalf of a great many fine people with whom I worked at Loughborough College over 37 years and I thank them now and the college for nominating me,” he said.

Croydon College head of student life Di Layzelle was recognised for her service to FE having worked tirelessly at the college for over a quarter of a century in various roles. She has steered students and the college to engage in, and support, many significant causes to the benefit of Croydon and its community.

“It’s fantastic for the college because I think it shows the true value they place on student engagement and this is really

about helping students aspire and achieve what they might never have dreamed they could,” said Ms Layzelle.

Barbara Poole, operations director for Acorn Training and board member of The National Training Federation for Wales (NTFW), also received an MBE, for services to work-based learning in Wales, as did Kathleen Rebecca Harker, former Ministry of Defence basic skills development manager, for services to Army education.

Northern Ireland’s Riverpark Training and Development managing director Colin William Hagan’s MBE was given for services to vocational skills, while Carole Ann Garrett received a British Empire Medal for services to enterprise and skills in Burnley.



Andrew Dennis



Alex Denholm



Eric Macintyre



Di Layzelle

New committee chairs promise era of collaboration

@BILLYCAMDEN
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Newly-elected Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) Select Committee chair Iain Wright has outlined his plans for greater collaboration with education's fellow newly-elected committee chair Neil Carmichael.

Labour MP Mr Wright (pictured below), who beat former BIS committee chair Adrian Bailey in the MPs' vote on Wednesday (June 17), said he was "determined to hit the ground running".

He said greater working with Conservative MP Mr Carmichael (pictured below right), who beat Tim Loughton, was one of his priorities.

"I am determined to hit the ground running and make the BIS select committee a real driving force in scrutinising government policies, championing business and skills and making sure FE has a really big voice," Mr Wright told *FE Week*. He added: "I'm particularly pleased about Neil's election because one of the pitches I made, and we worked together on this, is that I'm very conscious that actually, despite the best efforts of business and education, often it is really difficult to make sure skills policy is closely aligned and co-ordinated between education and business as it should be.

"We have pledged to work very closely together on joint enquiries about the skills system, about how education works together with business, and also, the big thing economically with this parliament will be productivity. So we are going to be



City & Guilds chief executive Chris Jones (far left), managing director Kirstie Donnelly (third from left) and TV presenter Kate Humble (centre, left) with Lion Award winners at London Zoo on June 17

GOING WILD FOR VOCATIONAL STARS

Eight FE and skills achievers took a walk on the wild side to receive their honours at this year's City & Guilds Lion Awards.

London Zoo was the setting as TV presenter Kate Humble, along with City & Guilds managing director Kirstie Donnelly and chief executive Chris Jones helped recognise the efforts of tutors, students and a college.

The winners were Amy Rush (National people's choice award), aged 20 and from Flint; Polaris Dyas (apprentice of the year and outstanding achiever), 20 and from Chester; Anthony Gregg (learner of the year), 41 and from London; Scott Mitchell (tutor of the year), 44 and from Chatham;

and Sisira Dharmathilaka (international learner), 44 and from Sri Lanka.

The remaining winners were the Royal School of Military Engineering/MKC Training (centre of the year) headquartered in Chatham; and April Poblete (future leader), 25 and from London.

Ms Donnelly said: "This year's winners are shaping the future workforce - from young women such as winner Amy Rush who is blazing a path for other women in the UK's male dominated motor industry, through to the committed lecturers ensuring individuals have the skills to allow them to achieve." See feweek.co.uk for more.

doing an awful lot together.

"We don't value FE as much as we should in this country, given the importance both economically and as a driver of social mobility, so I'd want to be using the committee as a means of firstly, putting the government on the spot and saying 'how are you making sure that FE is valued and supported as a means of driving forward that economic growth and skills agenda' and also using it as a means by which the FE sector can have a really strong voice."

Mr Carmichael said: "One thing I am going to be doing very soon is discuss with Iain our proposal of doing a joint report on dealing with productivity gap. We have already discussed

this on the assumption that we both would win, we actually talked about it a week or so ago."

Martin Doel, chief executive of the Association of Colleges (AoC), congratulated the duo, saying they would "make excellent chairs and hold government to account very effectively".

"We have worked with them both in the past and, through their close relationships with their local colleges, they have an excellent understanding of the challenges and opportunities further education and sixth form colleges will have in the next few years," said Mr Doel. "We strongly support the notion — as set out by Iain and Neil —

about the importance of joint working between their committees especially as the work of colleges crosses both. We look forward to meeting them in their new capacities to discuss how colleges can help."

A spokesperson for the Association of Employment and Learning Providers said: "It's encouraging the BIS committee will be chaired by a former minister with direct responsibility for apprenticeships and we look forward to working with Mr Wright. As a member of the Education committee in the last Parliament, Mr Carmichael is already aware of the importance of issues such as improving careers advice in schools and we hope he maintains vigilance on these."

See feweek.co.uk for more.



Commissioner's London review among number of reports

An "area-based assessment" is being carried out by FE Commissioner Dr David Collins into provision in South London's Lewisham, Southwark and neighbouring boroughs.

Skills Funding Agency (SFA) chief executive Peter Lauener revealed details of the review in a letter to corporation chair of Lewisham Southwark College Christopher Bilsland, sent in April but made public Wednesday (June 17).

It comes after *FE Week* reported last month that Dr Collins had been sent into both colleges after they got grade four Ofsted results — the second in a row for Lewisham Southwark — with BIS confirming they had entered "discussions" on a possible merger.

Mr Lauener wrote: "I can confirm the review will take the form of two linked structure and prospects appraisals of Lewisham Southwark and Greenwich Community Colleges, as well as a broader examination of the best arrangements to deliver strong outcomes for learners and employers across the area."

He also confirmed Lewisham Southwark had been placed into administered status. A spokesperson for the college said Dr Collins had "welcomed the detailed recovery plans that have been put forward by the new board and recently-appointed principal

Carole Kitching".

Greenwich interim principal Lindsey Noble said the college was "participating fully in the structure and prospects appraisal".

Mr Lauener's letter was made public the same day commissioner reports for City College Brighton and Hove, Warrington Borough Council, and Norfolk County Council were released.

The report on Brighton, based on a visit in February triggered by the SFA declaring it inadequate for financial health, warned that "having an executive team comprising almost entirely of interims has a destabilising effect on the college". Its former principal and chief executive Lynn Thackway and deputy principal and finance director Colin Henderson left in February this year and September 2014, respectively.

The college, rated as 'good' by Ofsted in June 2011, currently employs deputy chief executive Paul Lonsdale and principal Monica Box on an interim basis. Ms Box said considerable progress had been made to "move the college swiftly towards a sustainable financial position". A college spokesperson added: "The principal appointment process is underway and we expect this to be concluded by the end

of the month."

A letter from Skills Minister Nick Boles accompanying Dr Collins' report on Warrington's community employment learning and skills service, following a February inspection triggered by an 'inadequate' Ofsted rating in October, said he agreed with the commissioner's view that "delivery of this provision would be better provided by the colleges and other providers in the area". A council spokesperson said: "We fully accept the recommendations from the commissioner."

The report on Norfolk's adult education service, following a late March inspection triggered by an 'inadequate' Ofsted rating in January, called for "significant investment in the IT infrastructure and management information systems and new posts to lead and develop the service". A council spokesperson said in line with the commissioner recommendations it had appointed Helen Wetherall as interim head of adult education services. She added the council's "data and ICT" systems had also improved.

The reports came the day after a 38-page FE Commissioner guide on college mergers was published by BIS — see feweek.co.uk for more.

Oldham Ofsted blow

Oldham College principal Alun Francis has told how Ofsted grades "never have and never will" drive the college after it slumped from outstanding to 'requires improvement'.

The 7,500 learner college got the grade three rating across the headline fields, with inspectors noting "poor attendance and punctuality of a significant minority of students". They also said the college, allocated £8.1m by the Skills Funding Agency as of April, needed to improve apprentice assessments. However, principal Alun Francis hit back and questioned whether the college had been treated fairly. "Oldham College has never been driven by its Ofsted grade in the past, and will not be in the future," he said.

He said that a new performance measure, introduced in January, was "applied retrospectively during the inspection process in May". "The inspection team was open about the fact this meant the college could not be treated on the same basis as colleges inspected before January, but aimed to achieve parity with those inspected since then. We are not confident that this was the case," he said.

An Ofsted spokesperson said it would not comment on individual inspection results.

Lord Baker proposes 'late 20s' apprenticeship cut-off



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People in their late 20s and 30s "shouldn't be given apprenticeships," former Education Secretary Lord Baker has claimed.

In a speech at Wellington College, in Berkshire, on day one of the Festival of Education, which counts *FE Week* as a key media partner, he spoke about the future of technical education. And he warned apprenticeships for older learners were "largely a re-labelling exercise".

Lord Baker, who served as Secretary of State for Education and Science under Margaret Thatcher from 1986 to 1989, said the government had committed to a "very large" expansion in the apprenticeship movement, and that he "applauded" efforts to reach 3m starts by 2020. But he said they "should be 3m good apprenticeships," adding: "Many of them are now for people in their late 20s and 30s.

"Apprenticeships were never devised

for those sorts of people, and shouldn't really be given to them in my view, particularly in the public sector it's largely a re-labelling exercise. The really significant levels of apprenticeship are at 16 and 18, but an apprenticeship is supposed to last for two or three or four years. You don't need to spend two or three or four years as an apprentice in retail to know how to run a shop. You really don't."

Last academic year, learners aged 25 and above made up 37 per cent of the 440,400 apprenticeship starts. It was 45 per cent of the 510,200 starts the previous year and 44 per cent of the 520,600 apprenticeships in 2011/12.

Lord Baker also spoke about how his University Technical College (UTC) programme for 14 to 19-year-olds was developing, with 30 currently in operation and a further 20 due to open by 2017. He said asking learners to leave school at 14 was a "challenge", requiring a "big marketing job".

But when pressed by *FE Week* on the fact both the Hackney and Black Country UTCs were closing this summer, with the latter having been rated as inadequate by Ofsted, and on recruitment and attendance problems facing a number of UTCs, Lord Baker said he accepted there were instances where the model hadn't worked.

"Out of the 30, we have decided to close two because I'm not interested in keeping failing schools going. If I was still Secretary of State, I would close failing schools very quickly," he said. "We have had two that have not done well and the reason why they did not do well was they had very poor heads and governing bodies. We are now very much more involved. We sit on the board of appointments of head-teachers in UTCs."

Lord Baker said recruitment had been "sticky at the beginning" but was "now much better", adding that the UTCs opening this September would "virtually all be fully-subscribed, some over-subscribed".

He also sang the praises of UTC Reading,



which this month revealed it had become the first UTC to be rated outstanding by Ofsted.

He said: "For a UTC, which has only been

going for two years, pioneering a new type of education, to get an outstanding is unique in the history of education. It's remarkable."

'Governors don't know entrepreneurship' — Donohue

Most college governors "don't know what entrepreneurship is," Gazelle chief executive Fintan Donohue told Festival of Education-goers.

Mr Donohue, in what is believed to have been a first public appearance since he revealed in *FE Week* he had no knowledge of the success rates cheating that went on at North Herfordshire College (NHC) while he was principal, spoke about the need for colleges to innovate.

"I think one of the big things is that most of our governing bodies don't know what entrepreneurship is," he told the audience on day one of the festival.

"Let's make it simpler and say, 'what's the cost and return on innovation in the organisation'.

"Governing bodies spend oodles of time monitoring I think very small amounts of money sometimes and very manageable things. The real cost to colleges is in innova-

tion and growth but it's quite invisible for most of our governing bodies."

He added that colleges needed to be "inventive" when trying to deliver their "community mission", and said they should turn to alternative sources of income, like local businesses, when trying to run competitions and other elements "beyond the classroom".

"If you're in the college system and you look at programmes of study and the funding, there is a lot of flexibility in there if you are prepared to find ways to stretch it," he said.

"I think there will be ways in which we can do it, but there is a real possibility of doing more with students beyond the classroom. We have a mentality at the moment that we can only do what we are funded to do.



"But the truth is we have large assets, big campuses, lots of technology and resources, and if we want to deliver our community mission then I think we're going to have to find new ways of saying 'this doesn't have to be funded, this is a gift from our college'.

"We can run competitions, we can do much more with it, alongside that which we're funded to do, and I think we're going to have to think about doing that if we're going to give the young people, the adults, an opportunity to go beyond what the public sector is going to fund in the future."

Mr Fintan, whose entrepreneurialism-promoting Gazelle organisation has come under fire for failing to produce evidence of a return for its college members on their £3.5m-plus investment of public funding, was on a panel including Association of Colleges deputy

chief executive Gill Clipson.

Peter Jones Foundation chief executive Alice Barnard was also on the panel.

She said: "We talk about employer engagement all the time, and some places have done very well with it, and some places it's just talked about and not a lot happens.

"To have meaningful business engagement, that needs to be businesses coming into colleges. It means work placements. It means masterclasses, mentoring, business services. It means taking on apprentices.

"Government is talking about taking on 3m apprentices, but you need the businesses to commit to that. I could promise 3m apprentices right now in the same way as the government has, but if I don't have any employers lined up, then that could take me 150 years. It's really critical that we don't just talk the talk."

More FE coverage from the Festival of Education will appear in a supplement with edition 143 of *FE Week*.

FE WEEK COMMENT

Growth cash today with no further delay

When FE Week exclusively reported the SFA delay to the quarter three growth allocations the consequence was inevitable.

Independent learning providers and colleges posted comments online to say they would be, or indeed had started, scaling back on apprenticeship recruitment.

At the FE Week event in Westminster on Tuesday (June 18), one provider also described how this was damaging its hard-won relationships with employers.

It is clearly ridiculous for the sector to scale back at the same time as the government has set ambitious growth targets. So how have we found ourselves in this position and what should be done about it?

The Treasury blocked the SFA from making allocations ahead of the July budget.

But the government's 3m apprenticeships target requires a strong partnership between government and the FE sector.

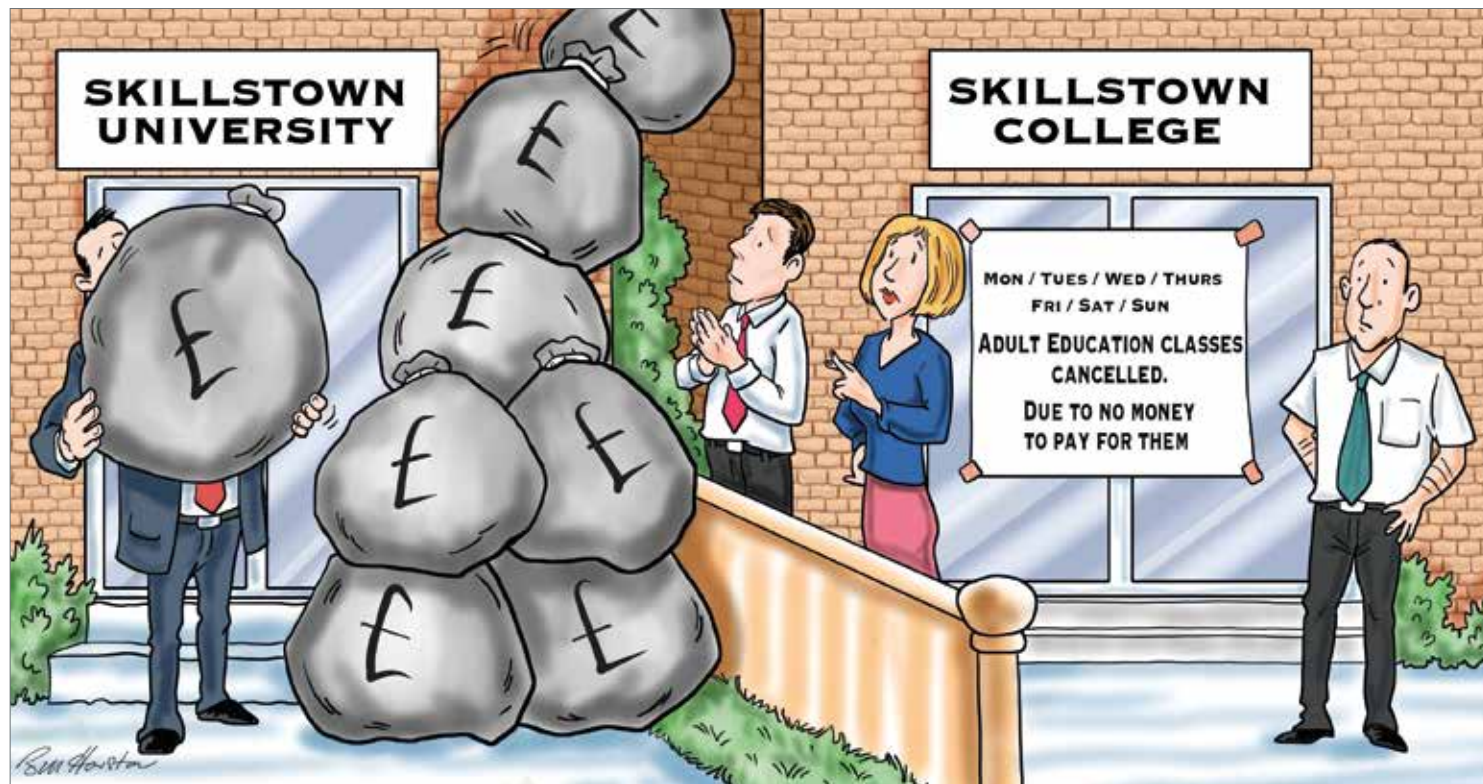
It simply can't be achieved against a backdrop of mistrust and uncertainty.

So, with the support of the SFA, the Association of Employment and Learning Providers should invite Treasury officials to their annual conference.

Let these policy-makers hear first-hand how damaging the delay is proving and demand the growth funding is allocated without any further delay.

Chris Henwood

chris.henwood@feweek.co.uk



Higher education cash should go to 'falling over FE'

@FCDWHITTAKER

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The government should take some of the "buckets of cash" given to higher education and use it to prop up FE, a leading policy adviser has said.

Jonathan Simons (pictured front), head of education at the right-leaning Policy Exchange think-tank, which counts Skills Minister Nick Boles as founder, said the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) should divert cash from universities to help FE, which is "falling over".

In an exclusive interview with *FE Week*, and expanding on his above comments from the Northern Rocks pedagogy conference in Leeds this month, he said the government needed to ensure value for money for "all students, regardless of what route they take".

He said: "In advance of a challenging spending review, we need to think hard about how we best spend all available government funds. When it comes to post-secondary education, the field is currently skewed in

favour of higher education."

The sector, already hit facing a 24 per cent budget cut, is waiting to hear how a £900m in-year cut across BIS and the Department for Education would affect funding.

Indeed, at the time the 24 per cent cut was announced, Association of Colleges chief executive Stewart Segal said: "This is another major cut in budgets for the employment and skills sector while the funding for higher education continues to increase. This is the wrong focus while we are trying to give vocational learning the status it deserves."

And cashflow concerns after the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) announced it was delaying a decision on growth requests for extra provision already delivered until after the July 8 Budget, have prompted some providers to halt apprenticeship intakes.

Mr Simons said: "When the adult skills budget is being cut by 24 per cent in 2015/16, and at the same time the higher education sector reports discretionary reserves for 2013/14 equivalent to just under half of their entire annual income, I'd expect BIS to think

hard and work with colleges, universities, employers and training providers to ensure value for money in education for all students after the age of 18, regardless of what route they take and which qualifications they study."

A BIS spokesperson said: "Any funding decisions will be made following the spending review."

But Mr Simons' call for a review of higher education funding in relation to FE was echoed in the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (Niace) submission for next month's Budget.

"Partners across the sector recognise that to improve both understanding and take-up of skills training, from employers and individuals alike, we need to strive for greater simplification of the structures, funding streams and qualifications levels underpinning both FE and higher education," it said.

It added: "We propose that government creates a single funding agency for all post 19 funding, merging the functions of the Skills Funding Agency and the Higher Education Funding Council for England."

COMMENTS

UTCs team to 'work with' Boles on programme

Just what do they expect when many schools do their very best to keep UTCs and local colleges out?

The statutory duty for careers which insists that schools provide information on ALL alternatives has far fewer teeth than the funding of their own sixth form or KS4.

Janet Colledge

Enterprise bill to protect term 'apprenticeship' and force public bodies to recruit

Giving apprenticeships the same legal protection as university degrees is a good move that will help more people realise that they are an equally valuable route for learning and starting a successful career.

MarkFarrarAAT

Former North Hertfordshire College principal Fintan Donohue denies knowledge of success rates manipulation

Not sure what the fuss is about really... this practice of cutting off non-achieving candidates from the ILR has been happening for years in the sector.

However the cuts to funding means fewer ITPs and FE Colleges can afford to financial payback in this trade-off, meaning a drop in success rates and a drop in Ofsted grades across the sector!

The stats don't lie, just look at the overall success rates and Ofsted grades!

Kim Hayter

It's the same at our college. The Principal's view is that if the rest of the sector are doing this then we need to as well.

I just can't understand why the EFA and SFA don't do something to stop this - don't they want to know how the FE sector is performing or don't the ministers want the public to know or are they just happy to have reduced funding claims in a time of limited funds!!

Julie

It's a bit like the difference between tax avoidance and evasion.

This is probably more avoidance at the moment, but it still undermines the Colleges that have genuine integrity and needs to be addressed.

We need the SFA and funding auditors to start looking at this as part of their audit cycle.

Bob Smith

TOP COMMITTEE CHAIR ELECTION TWEETS

@daveyw73

Congratulations to @IainWrightMP new chair @CommonsBIS and @stroud_neil new chair @CommonsEd Both #FE supporters. More joint working needed

@EduSkillsHE

Pleased to see @stroud_neil and @IainWrightMP have been elected to @CommonsBIS and @CommonsEd - Great news!

@PeteJeffreys 11h11 hours ago

Interesting to see @stroud_neil elected as Chair of @CommonsEd given his focus on Edu Governance & Leadership

@Chris_Tweedale

@CommonsEd @stroud_neil Congratulations from all at @CfBT_CST

?@Lex_EduSkills

Welcome to @stroud_neil who has been chosen as the new chair of the @CommonsEd committee - he'll be a strong voice for the education sector

A background image showing two students. On the left, a young Black man with glasses and a blue sweater holds a pen, looking towards the camera. On the right, a young white woman with blonde hair is working on a mechanical device, possibly a car engine, using a red and black probe.

14-19 REFORMS:

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Adult learners’ struggles to achieve recog

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Adult learners who battled against the odds, against self-doubt and previous bad experiences to return to education were honoured at the Adult Learners’ Week (ALW) awards.

The award winners and nominees, who ranged in age from 19 to 85, as well as the tutors, projects and employers who helped them get there, received their awards at an uplifting ceremony near London’s Trafalgar Square on Monday (June 15).

Also in attendance were senior figures from the Skills Funding Agency, Association of Colleges, Association of Employment and Learning Providers, Find a Future, colleges and independent learning providers among others.

The awards came as part of ALW — seven days of events, activities and campaigns to celebrate and raise awareness of lifelong learning, organised by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (Niace).

David Hughes (pictured below), Niace chief executive, said: “Awards like this are very special. It’s an emotional evening, because some of those winners are just amazing and it’s just sometimes important in our society to say ‘let’s celebrate people who have never really been recognised before’.

“And the impact that has on them and their families and the people around them is immense.”

The outstanding individual award winner was Lee Hughes, aged 30 and from Barnsley, who left school with no qualifications and fell into drug addiction.

But after kicking his habit and studying an Access to HE diploma at Northern College, he is now reading modern history at Sheffield Hallam University.

“It’s surreal to win the award,” he said. “I’d been written off a few years ago and so to get an award for learning and what I’ve done is mind boggling.”

Lee said he felt the awards were important to inspire other learners.

“It’s championing further adult education, so the people who win awards can go out and share their experiences,” he said.

“It’s never too late to learn – I’m doing things I’d never dreamed of doing a few years ago.”

Winner of the newly-introduced patron’s award, chosen by Niace patron HRH Princess Anne, Adele Tilley, aged 26 and from Leicester, agreed.

“I think it spurs people on and it shows people around you that you can achieve what you want to achieve,” she said.

“Even if you didn’t set out like that from the beginning, you don’t have to be a high achiever from the beginning to be a high achiever in the end.”

Adele grew



Niace president Nick Stuart (front) with the Humber LEP team



Graham Hasting-Evans, NOCN managing director, with Jami Blythe



Carole Stott, governor's chair at Bath College and chair of Find a Future and the Association of Colleges, with Karen Scott



Niace adult learning ambassador Amanda Scales with Lee Hughes



BBC Learning executive editor Lisa Percy with Keith Rogers



Graham Hasting-Evans and the Screwfix team



City College Coventry governors' board chair Maggie Galliers and Adele Tilley



David Harbourne, acting chief executive of the Edge Foundation, and Mohamed Mahyoub

up in care, which had a huge impact on her schooling, and didn’t return to learning until she was 21, having escaped an abusive relationship.

She completed GCSEs in maths, English and ICT, went on to do an access diploma in business management and is now working to gain a master’s degree at De Montfort University.

“Starting out was the hardest challenge, taking that first step,” she said.

“After that, everything else gets easier, as your knowledge grows so does your confidence.

“I feel totally honoured and elated at

the minute — to have won the award is an amazing experience for me.

“I’m sure what I’m going to do in the future to be honest – there are so many opportunities I could take up, I’m going to finish my masters see how the land lies then and take it from there, but whatever it’s going to be it’ll be big.”

However, amid the celebrations there was a sombre note – with more and more chunks being taken from the Adult Skills Budget as part of the austerity cuts, Mr Hughes said he was concerned the that opportunities which this year’s award winners had grasped would not be available in the future.

“We’ve got a real fight on to make sure there’s public investment to help people who didn’t get a chance the first time round to have another go,” he said.

“Because when they do their lives are transformed, the lives of the people around them are transformed and businesses are transformed.”

ALW, which ran from June 13 to 19, also saw taster courses and have-a-go sessions up and down the country, offering people the chance to try their hands at hundreds of different skills, from refereeing, circus performing and ukulele to online safety, rocket building and digital photography.

gnised at lavish annual awards ceremony



‘Back to class Mr Boles’

In the spirit of ALW Labour MP Barry Sheerman (pictured above) called for Skills Minister Nick Boles to be sent back to the classroom.

Mr Sheerman made the comments at the House of Commons ALW reception on Tuesday (June 16).

“We have got to fight back, positively, creatively [against funding cuts],” he said.

“I respect Nick Boles as a minister and his passion for this area, and we’ve got to educate him, transform him and get him on our side, because we aren’t going to go under with a whimper, we are going to fight our corner.”

Lee Hughes, who picked up this year’s outstanding individual ALW award, also spoke at the event, praising his college, Northern College, but said he was “baffled” by the funding cuts, which he described as “counterproductive and wrong”. “Compare my meagre education to those in power now,” he said.

“Surely if I can spot the flaws in slashing adult education funding, and the devastating effect it will have on people, then one would think they could spot it too.”

ADULT LEARNERS’ WEEK 2015 NATIONAL AWARD WINNERS

- | | |
|--|---|
| Patron’s Award
Adele Tilley, 26, Leicester | Digital Learning Award
Keith Rogers, 43, Canterbury |
| President’s Award
Humber Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) | National Employer Award
Winner: Screwfix
Finalist: Canley Food Packers
Finalist: ZF Lemforder UK LTD |
| Outstanding Individual Award
Winner: Lee Hughes, 30, Barnsley
Finalist: Ishenaisu Ntaibu, 45, Bradford
Finalist: John Pierre-Madigan, 49, Huddersfield
Finalist: Vera Benfield, 85, Croydon | Learning for Work National Individual Award
Jami Blythe, 37, Sunderland |
| European Social Fund Outstanding Individual Award
Andrea Sanders, 48, Barnsley | Young Adult Learner of the Year National Award
Mohammed Mahyoub, 23, Warrington |
| European Social Fund National Young Adult Learner Award
Katie Crisp, 19, Cornwall | National Project Award
Winner: Back in the game
Finalist: Money House
Finalist: Right Direction — West Yorkshire Community Rehabilitation Company |
| European Social Fund National Project Award
Wiltshire Scrapstore | Tutor of the Year Award
Winner: Karen Scott, 47, Leicester
Finalist: Joan Murray, 60, Skipton
Finalist: Bernadette King, 50, Liverpool |

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Shadow Minister Woodcock in ‘listening mode’

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New Shadow Minister for Young People John Woodcock MP said he was “in listening mode” at a special *FE Week* event at the Houses of Parliament to introduce him to the sector.

The event on Tuesday (June 16) gave 180 representatives from providers, colleges and awarding bodies the chance to tell the Labour MP what opposition policies they would like to see proposed in the new Parliament.

Mr Woodcock said: “I am very much in listening mode.

“I need to understand from all of you what’s happening in the sector... and what your sense is of the big challenges facing you.”

He said Labour had “palpably failed” to convince the public it could do better than the Conservatives at the election.

“And that requires some sense of determination yes, that we will do better next time, but also some humility,” he said.

“So we need as an opposition to reassess with you, what was right, what was wrong and not going into this simply committed to saying the same things as we were over that last five years with the same results.”

Key on providers’ list of concerns were issues around provider engagement.

Mike Motley, managing director of TQ Training, told the Shadow Minister: “Employers’ involvement with apprenticeships is at about 14 per cent in this country which is paltry.”

When Mr Woodcock asked why engagement was so low, and what government could do, Mr Motley told him incentives were key.

He said: “It’s about showing them the real benefit and we do all we can through the provider network but I don’t think enough is done from a government perspective.”

Mr Motley said reaction to the apprenticeship grant for employers, an incentive payment for those who take on apprentices, was that it was too bogged down in bureaucracy.



He said: “The other issue with employers is size — 97 per cent of employment in this country is through small and medium-sized enterprises [SMEs] and they are the hardest to engage.”

John Hyde, executive chair of HIT Training, said employers needed “stability” in order to commit to apprenticeships.

“If the government wants three million apprenticeships, they’ve got to forget trailblazers and just get on with what we can do,” he said.

“We haven’t got time to change all the programs and all the problems that are

going to come with it — it’s either 3m apprenticeships or Trailblazers, take your pick.”

Guy Helman, chief executive of the provider Impact Futures, blamed government strategy for the lack of SME engagement.

“I’d like to know if there’s going to be an employer engagement policy where actually deciding on policy we’re going to engage with the 97 per cent of SMEs out there in stead of the 3 per cent who are the larger employers,” he said.

Mr Woodcock said that while he couldn’t say what the government planned to do about the issue, he could “absolutely recognise the need” to engage differently.

“Having seen the way that Whitehall and ministers work from the inside, I can understand why government often does engage with blue chip employers because they have the economies of scale,” he said.

“But it’s unquestionable that the system is not delivering for small businesses.

“Recognising that problem is not the same as solving it, but I think absolutely we do

Above, from left: Panel members Richard Atkins, Association of Colleges president, Stewart Segal, Association of Employment and Learning Providers chief executive, Angela Middleton, chief executive of MiddletonMurray, Nick Linford, director of *FE Week* publisher Lsect, John Woodcock MP and Paul Steer, OCR head of policy and public affairs. Below left: audience members at the meet Mr Woodcock



have to work from that basis.”

Key to this, he said, would be understanding why apprenticeships were not “suitable” for small employers and how to communicate better with SMEs.

He added: “FE cannot continue in perpetuity to be the second or third cousin to other areas of education.

“It is extraordinary what many of your institutions have been able to achieve over these last few years given the squeeze — not simply financial squeeze but a squeeze on aspirations from a government which talks to universities, talks to schools and in many ways fails to understand what you are capable of.”





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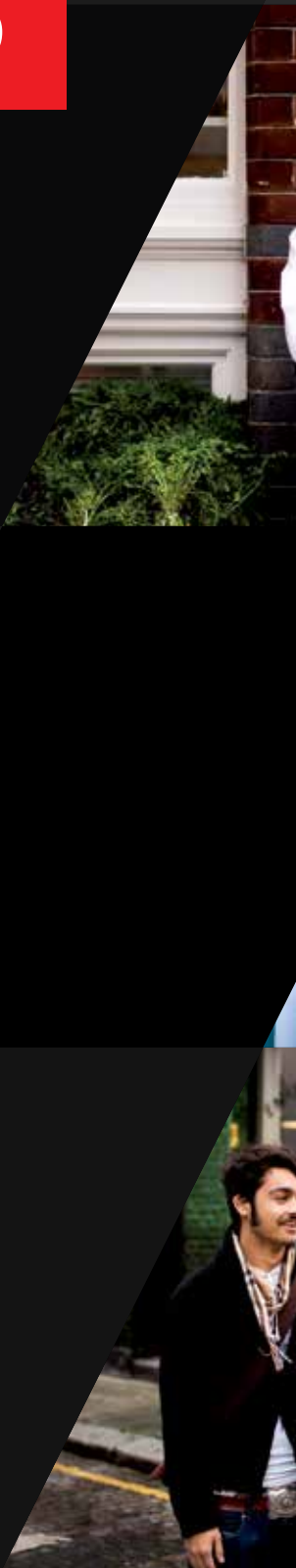
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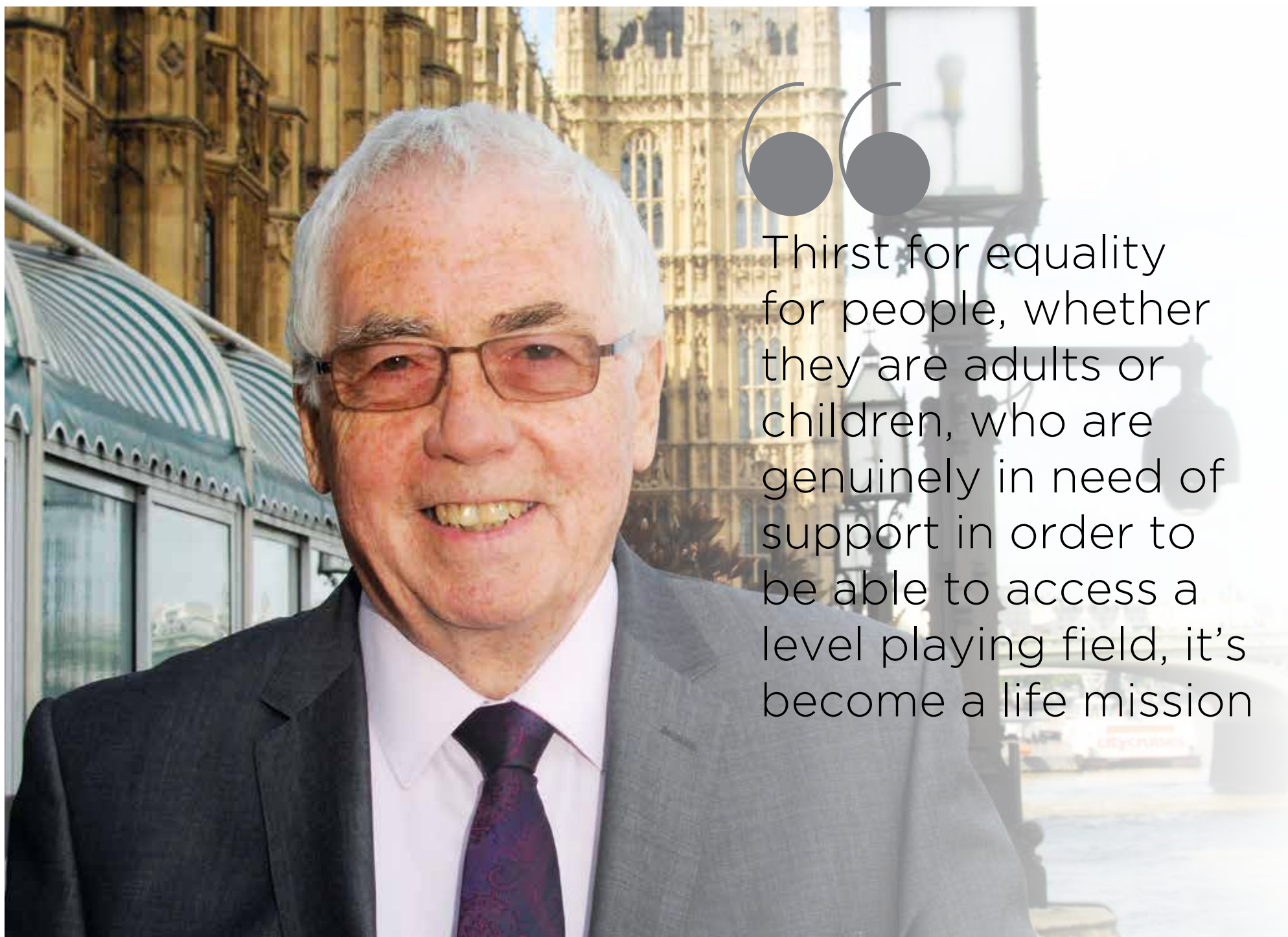
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PROFILE



Thirst for equality for people, whether they are adults or children, who are genuinely in need of support in order to be able to access a level playing field, it's become a life mission

LORD IN THE TRUST

@REBECCA COONEY
REBECCA.COONEY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

As a teenager, Lord Willis of Knaresborough, a former head teacher, ex-Liberal Democrat MP and outgoing chair for the Association of Colleges' charitable trust, dreamed of a career in football.

But although Burnley-born-and-bred Willis (known, less formally, as Phil) played for Burnley FC junior team, he wasn't good enough to make the cut for the senior team.

Having left school to unsuccessfully pursue his dream, he found himself faced with going to one of Burnley's 200 cotton mills to find work, until his postman father, George, intervened.

"My father frogmarched me back to school and said: 'You're not going to be a postman'," says Willis.

George's insistence on education stemmed from his own experience — he had passed his 11-plus but been unable to go to grammar school because his parents couldn't afford the uniform.

"He resented that until the day he died," said

Willis, aged 73.

"And the fact that my brother then failed his 11-plus was horrendous, and then that I had passed it but wanted to give up grammar school, he couldn't cope with that at all — so he was determined, he took me back and pleaded with the head to have me back in the sixth form.

"And it was the best thing he ever did."

Willis's childhood, he says, was "a very happy childhood, but a very unhappy one".

George had been a prisoner of war for four years in the Second World War and returned "a wrecked man".

"He could never really engage with humanity after he came back," says Willis.

Willis's mother, Nora, was a nurse from Donegal, and it was she who instilled an understanding of the importance of qualifications in him from an early age.

"What my mum wanted to be most of all was a district nurse on a bicycle, and she had to be a registered nurse rather than a state-enrolled nurse to do that," he explains.

"And I can remember literally being in her bed in the morning when the postman came with a letter saying she had passed and become

a registered nurse.

"And I couldn't understand why she was crying — it seems very strange to me, because I read the letter to her, and it clearly said that she had passed, and yet she was in bits. I think I recognised, even at that early stage, how important education was."

Nora died when Willis was 13, leaving George "just utterly and totally broken" and "drinking heavily" as a result.

"School was the only thing that kept me sane, and school was just fabulous," says Willis.

"I had wonderful teachers who picked me up, disciplined me, made sure my nose was kept to the grindstone, and without them I would have definitely gone off the rails — because I was a very troublesome kid.

"It is meeting inspirational people who you aspire to be like that actually keeps you motivated to move forward."

Despite his early experience of tragedy, Willis, a dad-of-two, comes across as gruffly optimistic. "Looking back, there wasn't a lot wrong," he says.

"I can remember listening to kids as a head, and when I was teaching, bemoaning

what they haven't got, and I used to get really irritated — you know, you're fit and healthy and you're reasonably intelligent, you know, you can do whatever you like."

Once back at school, Willis developed a new ambition — teaching.

"I think it was because I had so many inspirational models as teachers when I was at school," he says.

"Not only were they good teachers, but they just loved imparting knowledge."

The idea of inspiration, for Willis, seems to have been central to his work as a teacher and an MP, and later with the Association of Colleges.

"I think inspiration and aspiration go together," he says.

"You cannot aspire to something unless you have somebody or something which you regard as inspirational — it's a mistake to just say you should aspire to go to university.

"Why would anybody aspire to go to university, unless they knew people who were inspirational, who were at university and the same goes for technical skills. That's the bit that we've got to connect with."

After completing teacher training at City of

It's a personal thing

What's your favourite book?

I don't read fiction, but two years ago I came across Stieg Larsson and *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, and I read the whole trilogy right through to *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornets' Nest* and I just loved that genre. So I'm addicted to Swedish crime/thriller fiction. I just found it really quite exciting.

What do you do to switch off from work?

Sport. I follow Leeds United and I'm addicted to sport. When I was a youngster football and athletics were my great passions. Now, my wife and I regularly go to Leeds United games. We follow cricket, and we go to different places in the world to watch Formula One.

What's your pet hate?

You'll find this very petty, but I hate people who are fit and active parking in disabled and parent-only bays in supermarkets. My wife pulls me away and says: "Don't say anything" — but it really annoys me. It's petty, but it's true.

If you could invite anyone, living or dead, to a dinner party, who would it be?

Former Lib Dem leader Charles Kennedy. He was a great friend of mine and we were incredibly close for a number of years, and I used to spend, when I first came into parliament, far more nights than I should have done in his flat in Victoria where we used to have an eclectic group of people who would come and just simply chat and tell stories and raconteur, right through until the early hours.

Since I left the House of Commons, I lost touch with Charles, so his death came as a huge shock, and I would dearly love to have him back at a dinner party and to be able to rekindle some of those wonderful experiences. He was quite a remarkable human being.

What did you want to be when you were growing up?

I wanted to be a footballer — that was my great desire.

From left Willis's daughter Rachel, Willis, wife Heather and son Michael on election night 2005



Willis and wife Heather at their wedding in 1974

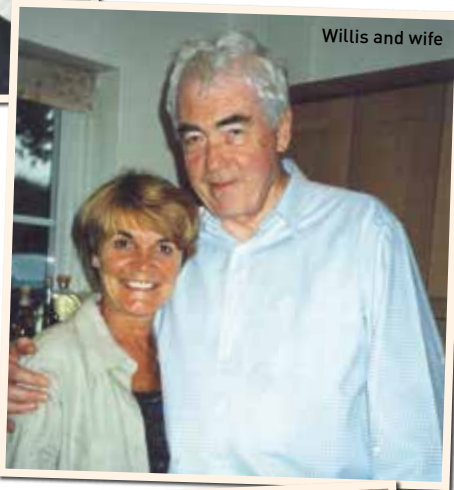


Willis and his long-time friend former Liberal Democrat leader Charles Kennedy

Willis and Michael at family farm in Donegal



Willis and wife



Lord Willis with his dogs Molly and Murphy saved from pound in Ireland 14 years ago



Willis at family farm in Donegal



From left: Willis with daughter Rachel, son in law Tim and wife Heather in the House of Commons

Leeds and Carnegie College (now part of Leeds Metropolitan University), he moved through various teaching roles in and around Leeds, including senior master at Primrose Hill High School, where he met wife Heather, then a PE teacher.

In 1979 he became head of Ormesby School in Cleveland, which was pioneering the integration of severely disabled youngsters into mainstream education.

"I just loved that school," he says. "We integrated every child with severe physical disability south of the River Tees into a school over a period of about four years — and it was an inspirational journey."

Willis may have loved the school, but he hated being a head.

"I became a head in 1978, the year before Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister," she said.

"So virtually all my headships from '79, right through to '97, were really under a regime which changed the face of education.

"And I just felt as a head that what I was doing was balancing books. I was a

bureaucrat — and I wasn't good at it... being in a classroom was so much more exciting than that."

He was headhunted to run John Smeaton Community School, where he set out to introduce the same principles of integration.

"Being able to say no child should be left behind because of their disability — that really has stayed with me in my political life," he says.

"That thirst for equality for people, whether they are adults or children, who are genuinely in need of support in order to be able to access a level playing field, it's become a life mission."

For the first time, Willis found himself living outside of his school's catchment area in a small village and became embroiled in a local environmental campaign against a landfill site slated to be built on the outskirts of the village.

"And I realised that unless you are on the inside when decisions are made, you can forget about affecting change," he says.

"And so I said, 'Right, I'm going to start'."



Willis aged 6

In 1985, and at the age of 44, Willis joined the Liberal Party, which would later merge with the Social Democrats to form the Liberal Democrats, and in 1988 won a seat on Harrogate Borough Council, becoming council leader two years later.

His arrival in Parliament was a surprise — he ran against Norman Lamont in what had been considered a safe Tory seat, Harrogate and Knaresborough, and took it from him in 1997.

But a seat in Parliament wasn't all he had hoped it would be, thanks to Labour's huge majority.

"When I was leader of Harrogate Borough Council, I genuinely felt I could make a real difference," he says.

"You could literally make decisions and officers would carry them out.

"And coming into Parliament was a huge disappointment because suddenly you find you are in a minority party on the periphery of things.

"So you found other ways to work, really. I spend a huge amount of time in my constituency."

In 2010, Willis lost his seat in the Commons,

but gained one in the Lords.

"I didn't like it when I first came," he says.

"It was just too polite, too genteel, everybody was so nice — I am suspicious, you know?"

And it was in the Lords, unimpressed by free schools that he moved away from school policy and developed an interest in science policy, and FE.

"I felt the FE agenda was totally and utterly ignored over the last five years," he says.

"I cannot remember a single serious debate on FE in the House of Lords. It was merely a pawn of the Department."

But, he says: "It's its own worst enemy — the FE sector constantly says, 'We'll make it work. No matter what's thrown at us, we'll make it work'."

And, although he's not sure he'd go back into politics now — "Politicians are regarded with such contempt, I just don't think it's worth the sacrifice, to be honest," he says — he's got no regrets about making the leap.

"It's been this wonderful opportunity," he says.

"Doors open, and you either go through the door, or you don't, but don't moan about it if you didn't."



ANDREW MORRIS

Member of both the Learning & Skills Research Network planning group and the Policy Consortium

New ‘data-driven’ BIS Vet research centre hits the spot

The new aims and role of the Centre for Vocational Education Research (CVER) has become clearer since a consultation event this month, as Andrew Morris explains.

The new Centre for Vocational Education Research (CVER), funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) was the focus of attention at a major gathering of college leaders and researchers this month.

Directed by Professor Sandra McNally of the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics, the new research centre will be developing much needed evidence aimed at improving the delivery of vocational programmes and involvement of employers. A clearer picture of routes to employment and better information about their value should be the result.

The programme for the new centre was set out and discussed at the latest workshop of the Learning & Skills Research Network.

In an encouraging sign for the sector, feedback from consultation events such as this will help shape the centre’s programme. Close links with the Education and Training Foundation are also planned as it develops the ideas for a vocational education and training (Vet) centre set out by the McLoughlin Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (Cavtl).

With its wider brief as a hub for practice development and innovation the Cavtl Centre will complement the data-driven research of the BIS centre. By connecting quantitative research with the development of practice the prospects of an evidence-based vocational education system look a little brighter today.

A top priority for the LSE-based research centre is to develop a robust descriptive overview of the system. The actual experience of young people and the value of the various routes they take needs to be analysed; it’s good to hear the CVER will tackle this.

By simply describing the Vet system systematically an important first step will have been taken. The absence of common language and concepts between employers, awarding bodies, colleges and government — let alone students and parents — has been a real block on progress, a point emphasised strongly at the LSRN workshop.

The bread and butter work of the new centre will be working with large datasets, run as it is by a consortium of economists from four institutions, led by the LSE. By

linking data together it will explore the value of vocational options, participation decisions, the quantity and quality of provision and influences on employer demand.

At last, important data about student journeys, qualifications, progression and employment, currently sitting in separate silos will begin to be connected up, throwing light on what is actually happening. But as researchers at the workshop pointed out: getting hold of it, cleaning it up and matching up records will be no easy task.

The economic value of vocational learning is not all that motivates students, as college leader were quick to point out at the workshop. Young people can be passionate as well as judicious in the way they make their choices.

The prospects of an evidence-based vocational education system look a little brighter today

Qualifications alone fail to capture all aspects of success in learning. Even data about levels can be misleading where different types of learner are lumped together inappropriately. At levels one and two for example some may be catching up after a poor time at school, others starting afresh after graduation.

Research centres serving the sector have come and gone — remember the Learning & Skills Research Centre and the Wider Benefits of Learning? What is vital is that this one not only crunches the numbers but also engages with the practice, policy and business communities to ensure that its work gets multiplied by others and its findings are taken on board.

It is refreshing to see the CVER addressing this at the outset. It will be producing documentation for the large datasets for the wider research community to use.

By engaging practitioners in developing the agenda and interpreting results it is more likely that people will sit up and take notice of the findings further down the line. And that’s what counts in the end if research is to make a difference.



DR LORNA PAGE

Qualified teacher, who has predominantly lectured in teacher education. Her research work centres on lesson observations, specifically how FE teachers perceive, engage and experience being observed teaching.

‘Watch out lesson observation — we’re coming to get you’

Ofsted is ending its system of graded lesson observation. It’s a subject that leant itself to the theme a conference on June 17 at the University of Wolverhampton’s Centre for Research and Development in Lifelong Education (Cradle). Dr Lorna Page was there and outlines the event.

The first national conference dedicated to the issue of lesson observation was entitled Lesson Observation: new approaches, new possibilities. It attracted lecturers, teachers, researchers and managers from as far afield as Guernsey.

It gave a much-needed platform for delegates to gather, discuss and reflect about the important and timely issue of lesson observation.

Launching the day’s proceedings was Professor Alan Tuckett, who reinforced the significance of the conference at a time when Ofsted finally recognises that graded lesson observations are not an effective or appropriate way to capture quality in learning and teaching.

Professor Tuckett’s aim for the day was that we should all leave pulsating with brilliant ideas about lesson observation.

Dr Matt O’Leary, the first of two keynote speakers, gave an engaging, informative account about the need for teaching to be an evidenced-based profession.

He used the idea of Japanese knotweed being a metaphor for lesson observation — the unwelcome visitor that is quickly colonising teachers’ professional lives.

Delegates were then fortunate to be able to call upon expert voices and join a variety of focus workshops, one of which was my own. It was entitled The impact of lesson observation on practice, professionalism and teacher identity.

The workshops were presented under four themes — making the transition to ungraded models of observation; recent research studies in lesson observation; peer observation/coaching and mentoring; and lastly, innovations and developments in observing classroom practice.

I joined Dr Ann LaHiff’s session which explored ‘Maximising vocational teachers’ learning: The developmental significance of observations’. She gave a passionate address to illustrate how lesson observation is a complex phenomena; that it’s more than just ‘watching’.

By the time we paused for coffee, delegates were cheerfully absorbed in exchanges relating to their own experiences of lesson observations. The energy and level of discussion that ensued illustrated how contentious the topic of lesson observation is, both for observers and observees.

Lots of nodding and positive murmurs confirmed that the findings from my own research on lesson observation resonated with the many delegates who attended my session.

Discussions that followed suggested that ungraded observations are being trialled around the country; however, they are bringing problems of post observation feedback, particularly the vocabulary being used by observers — how do you say a lesson is ‘good’ without suggesting it’s a grade two?

While the rain made attempts at dampening

How do you say a lesson is ‘good’ without suggesting it’s a grade two?

the campus’s grounds, the same could not be said inside the canteen where delegates were eagerly sharing their morning’s experiences and tweeting under the hashtag #obsconf2015.

Following lunch, Dr Phil Wood’s impassioned keynote talk called for a different type of observation: lesson study. This type of observation sees teachers planning collaboratively and observing the learners, not the teachers.

Dr Wood gave a compelling argument to state that learning is hidden, only elements of it can be seen — classrooms are complex adaptive systems and lesson study can be used as a system for supporting deep discussion on enhancing professional capital.

‘Using lesson observation to promote teacher-efficacy’ was the final session I attended.

Terry Pearson facilitated table discussions about whether lesson observation could promote teacher self-efficacy. Furthermore, he encouraged delegates to participate in practical challenges to demonstrate their own perceived self-efficacy. The overarching point Mr Pearson conveyed was we should be using lesson observation to address staff development needs, not to identify staff development needs.

To conclude the day’s events, delegates reconvened to dissect the issues addressed and pose questions that hitherto had been examined during the day.

Far too quickly, the conference came to a close. At the start of the day, Professor Tuckett’s aim was that we would all go away ‘pulsating with brilliant ideas about lesson observation’. I think it’s fair to say not only were we pulsating, we were positively reverberating — all I can say is, watch out lesson observation, we’re coming to get you.

Skills Minister Nick Boles told MPs this month the Dutch system of vocational education and training might be a model for England. Jeroen Onstenk outlines the Dutch system and considers whether Mr Boles might be onto something.

Vocational education and training (Vet) in the Netherlands is primarily part of the education system, rather than the labour system.

There is an elaborated system of technical and vocational education, with two pathways (apprenticeship and school-based), both including (in different proportions) school-based as well as work-based learning.

There were two separate Vet systems — a school-based system and an apprenticeship system — up until 1996, at which point various vocational learning paths and school types (the apprenticeship system and school-based vocational education; initial and adult vocational education) were integrated.

In the Dutch Vet system, hybrid qualifications are nowadays a broad and accepted part of the educational system. Highest level Vet qualification (level four) gives right of entrance to higher professional education (HPE), and, after successful completion of at least one year in HPE, also to university.

The Vet system is under constant pressure to respond to changing societal and economical demands.

Vocational education is increasingly regarded as the beginning of a vocational learning career, rather than as the culmination of skills acquisition.



JEROEN ONSTENK
Professor of talent development and pedagogic practice at Inholland University of Applied Sciences, Amsterdam, and contributor to last year's Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) report *Avoiding the Same Old Mistakes — Lessons for Reform of 14 to 19 Education in England*

Vet in the Netherlands — an inspiration for England?

During working life, workers will have to attend further training and change jobs on a number of occasions. This means that vocational education must afford a broad basis including technical, organisational and communicative as well as learning skills.

The system has been thoroughly restructured several times in the last 20 years. New courses and new contents as well as new didactics for vocational schools and apprenticeship have been implemented to respond better to the needs of a changing labour market.

The aim was to introduce, from 2005, a well functioning, clear and transparent qualification structure for senior secondary vocational education, which offers the possibilities of constant renewal and is an effective instrument for both the labour market and the educational field.

As it turned out, it took to 2012 before a new system was accepted. By then, the concept of

competence had become so disputed that it was discarded by the ministry.

However, the main characteristics of the new system (focus on occupational tasks; integration of knowledge and skills; broad qualification profiles) were kept intact.

Although the Vet system is mainly funded by the government, employers are on at least two levels actively engaged in the Vet system — defining qualifications/setting standards and delivering training and learning opportunities (internship and apprenticeship).

Regional Vet colleges are developing from what could be called industrial training centres into innovative learning centres, in order to prepare students better for working life as well as lifelong learning and citizenship.

One important lesson is that Vet can become a recognised part of the education system as a whole. Equality of esteem can be promoted by opening up educational

career possibilities (into higher education) as well as opening up realistic labour market opportunities.

“One important lesson is that Vet can become a recognised part of the education system as a whole”

There are some lessons to be learned from the qualifications restructure: reducing complexity; clustering professions (‘broad occupational profiles’); developing vocational tracks, organising and implementing successful hybrid qualifications.

Also lessons could be learned about the educational opportunities and the role of schools in Vet. Vocational pedagogy is broader than just preparing for specific jobs but is aiming for broad development with regard to vocational competence, citizenship and learning competency.

Although certainly not without difficulties or always successful, engagement of companies in such a broad aiming Vet and cooperation with schools in delivering high quality vocational education turns out to be possible.

By this cooperation and networking schools can compensate for lack of specialist expertise in vocational subjects.



KIRSTIE DONNELLY
UK managing director, City & Guilds

Is it really time for the UK to go Dutch?

Kirstie Donnelly considers whether in looking abroad for a model skills system — with the Netherlands offering the latest template — we neglect lessons that might be learned closer to home.

The latest country to emulate, apparently, is the Netherlands, with Skills Minister Nick Boles this month advising MPs to look there for a ‘transferable and applicable’ education system.

And it’s true the Dutch set a good example — ninth to our 20th in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development school rankings, with lower youth unemployment.

As the government will know, Dutch teens can opt for interchangeable pathways that don’t restrict what they do at 18, and more

than half take a vocational route. That’s a figure we in this sector can only dream of, so perhaps he’s right that it’s time to ‘Go Dutch’.

But let’s take a step back because we’ve been here before. It was only recently that debate in FE and skills was dominated by the German model, and we all remember the spirited discussion about the merits of the Swedish schools model.

Yet evidence then emerged suggesting the German approach wasn’t the best fit for the UK, and that the ability of the Swedish model to transform school standards was questionable.

What they want is evidence-based policy reform, stable funding and the freedom to respond to local demand.

And the truth is, we’re already embracing the most relevant aspects of the Dutch

design, making good progress towards enhancing flexibility and expanding access to technical options, for example via university technical colleges and career colleges.

During the election campaign there was endless debate about apprenticeships, and giving vocational education parity of esteem.

This suggests we are moving in the right direction, in allowing young people to pursue alternative professional and technical education routes while also keeping their options open, as is the case in the Netherlands.

But realistically, we’re not simply going to remake the UK system in the image of the Netherlands — or another country we admire.

Ultimately, I’m not sure this tendency to look abroad with rose-tinted glasses is that helpful. It overlooks the fact we are rarely comparing like with like.

Already, it’s clear that beyond the general emphasis on flexibility, core aspects of the Dutch system are not easily transferable.

There are definitely elements of the Dutch model that could work here, and we clearly have a good deal to learn from the experiences of other nations. However, it is also important to learn from Britain’s prior experiences — (something we know from our Sense and Instability research into 30 years of skills policy) — is not done nearly enough.

Certainly, it’s important for policy-makers to look at the most effective elements of the world’s best education and skills systems. But there is also a limit to what this can instructively tell us about our own.

As the Minister pointed out about the German model, every country has its own

unique economic and social cultures and so we also need to look closer to home. That’s not to simply accept the status quo. But change has got to be incremental and we should be advocating continuity over constant tampering, set within the UK’s own unique economic and social context.

“We should be advocating continuity over constant tampering, set within the UK’s own unique economic and social context”

So let’s rephrase the question. Rather than looking abroad for what is ‘transferable and applicable’, let’s raise our voices about the lessons we can offer to other countries.

Education is a vital export market for the UK, yet too often it feels like we focus only on our shortcomings and not our successes. By all means, let’s look at what the Dutch can do for us, but let’s look at what we can do for the Dutch and the rest of the world too.



DAVID
HARBOURNE

Acting Chief Executive, the Edge Foundation

What’s in a name? What’s in an apprenticeship?

The government announced its first measures aimed at helping it achieve the target of 3m apprenticeship starts by the end of this Parliament. David Harbourne assesses the measures, including the provision for legal protection of the ‘apprenticeship’ term.

When the government announced that the word ‘apprenticeship’ is to be legally protected, I had an odd sense of déjà vu. The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 introduced a raft of definitions, ranging from “apprenticeship agreement” to “recognised Welsh framework”. Under the Act, apprentices had to be employed, which put paid to programme-led apprenticeships.

That was the first legal definition of apprenticeship in this country in nearly 200 years. Before that, there had been a Statute of Artificers, passed during the reign of Elizabeth I — but it was abolished in 1805, and not replaced until 2009.

We don’t yet know what the new definition will be, but Skills Minister Nick Boles has said the Enterprise Bill will give the government powers to “take action when the term is misused to promote low quality courses”.

And that begs the question: what is a low quality course, in the context of an apprenticeship?

Previously, the government has equated poor quality with short duration — anything less than a year can’t be considered good enough. I always had my doubts about that.

When we first developed Modern Apprenticeships, the idea was to tailor the apprenticeship to the needs and abilities of the individual. Some people learn quicker than others. If full competency can be reached in 11 months, why make someone wait the extra month before they can claim to be qualified?

Next, we bump into concepts such as restrictive and expansive apprenticeships. Professors Alison Fuller and Lorna Unwin from the Institute of Education have been talking about this for some time. At the risk of over-simplifying their ideas, expansive apprenticeships prepare people for careers in a chosen occupational field, whereas restrictive apprenticeships prepare them for a narrowly-defined job role.

On this basis, almost all of Switzerland’s apprenticeships can be described as expansive. I visited a Unilever factory which makes powdered foods. Their apprentices learn by doing a variety of jobs in different parts of the factory, but they pick up additional skills and knowledge by attending off-job courses.

That sets them in good stead for their future careers, not just to work on a production line.

Alison and Lorna would argue that too many of England’s apprenticeships are restrictive, because they are based on the minimum skillset needed to do a particular job, and neglect the wider skills and experience offered to Swiss apprentices.

Then there’s the question of training versus assessment. The argument goes that in some cases, public funding pays for assessment, not training. There are definitely benefits from assessing and accrediting skills, but critics believe we should focus on training people who are new to their jobs, not on accrediting the skills of people who have already been in work for some time.

Previously, the government has equated poor quality with short duration. Anything less than a year can’t be considered good enough. I always had my doubts about that

In the end, you get what you’re willing to pay for. Here in England, there is a long tradition of co-investment in some sectors.

Engineering is a prime example, where both the state and the employer contribute towards apprenticeship training and assessment costs. In other sectors, external apprenticeship costs have been entirely state-funded, though employers do of course still pay apprentices’ wages and other employment costs.

Squaring all of these circles isn’t going to be easy. I don’t think the Trailblazers provide all the answers. I doubt a new statutory definition of apprenticeships will either, though I live in hope.

But saddled with a target of 3m apprenticeship starts, maybe the real question is this: will the government simply pile ‘em high and sell ‘em cheap? I seriously hope not.



PHIL HATTON

Former Ofsted inspector and lead consultant with The Learning Improvement Service

New inspection framework — what you need to know

The new common inspection framework handbooks have been published. Phil Hatton takes a closer look at what FE should be taking note of.

So, with all the hype associated with the launch of the new CIF covering all Ofsted inspection remits, what will be the difference for FE?

Looking at the wording that should guide inspector judgements, very little in terms of what is looked at has changed.

Safeguarding and the emphasis on the Prevent strategy had already been introduced on some inspections prior to becoming a requirement on July 1, as had the GCSE resit emphasis on English and maths.

The biggest change in methodology will be the move away from grading individual sector subject areas, to a grade for each type of provision, such as 16 to 19 study programmes, adult learning programmes, apprenticeships, traineeships, provision for high-needs learners (a new term for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities) and full-time provision for 14 to 16-year-olds.

Such judgement grades are already given at the back of current reports in the form of a grid table, so these are in reality being given more prominence as a separate report section.

These judgement grades for each type of provision will incorporate (as they do now) outcomes for learners, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the effectiveness of leadership and management, but with an additional judgement around the personal development, behaviour and welfare of learners (PDBW will be a new acronym soon).

Although it sounds ‘different’, some of the judgements required for the latter category have been in previous inspection frameworks. It will include taking pride in their work and becoming self-confident and assured.

Work-related learning, including external work experience, is a key part and needs to be ‘purposeful’.

Next comes development of personal, social and employability skills, including English, maths and ICT skills. This will be the real grade judgement deal breaker, especially where a college is in an area where English and maths has low school pass rates so GCSEs must be retaken (and I know I bang on about it, but the national averages in schools are just too low).

Then comes some slightly sloppy wording around ‘achieving their core learning aims, specific units of their main vocational qualifications and relevant additional qualifications that enhance their learning,

along with standards of work’ (taken from what is traditionally outcomes and probably better placed there if judgements are to be clear on inspection and in self-assessment).

New, but with prominence by the Further Education Funding Council 20 years ago, is ‘learners’ use of the information they receive on the full range of relevant career pathways’ (again, as colleges have been very good at this the relevance to me is ‘are schools to be judged as stringently as colleges no doubt will be?’).

Very prominent in inspection will be how well learners know how to protect themselves from the risks associated with radicalisation, extremism, forms of abuse, grooming and bullying, including through the use of the internet (I would encourage all colleges to really rethink their approach to educating learners around safe use of the internet, it became a ‘hot topic’ for particular inspectors over the last few months, featuring heavily in some reports).

Work-related learning, including external work experience, is a key part and needs to be ‘purposeful’

A new slant, taken from schools, is how programmes allow all learners to explore personal, social and ethical issues and take part in life in wider society and in Britain. And yes, ‘Every Child Matters’ has resurfaced just as many have been dropping it with ‘how well learners know how to keep themselves fit and healthy, both physically and emotionally’.

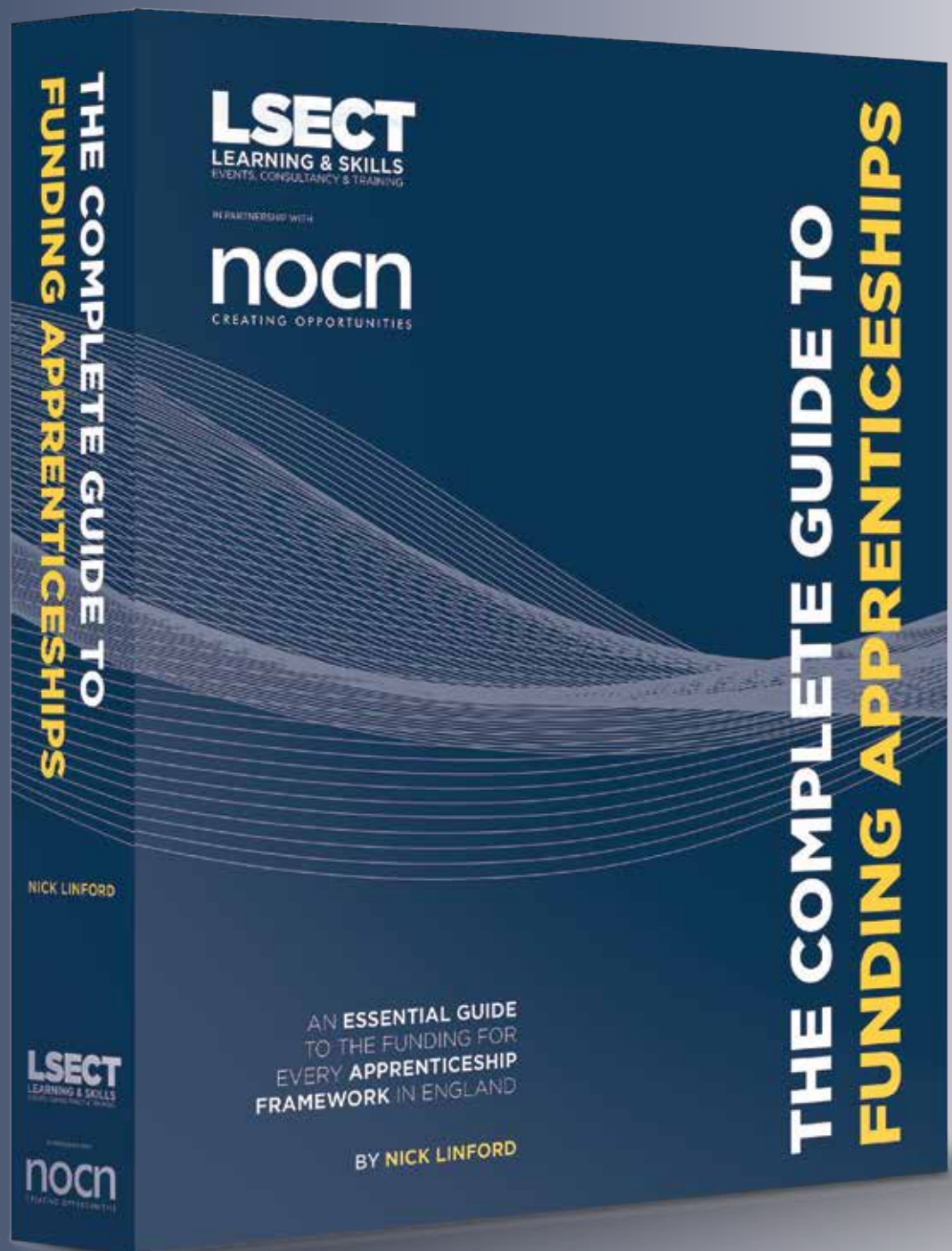
PDBW will also include attendance and punctuality, including participation in any distance learning activities (online learning and the use of virtual learning environments gaining prominence and again will need to be more explicitly addressed in self-assessment reporting). Perhaps the most school orientated of all are ‘compliance with any guidelines for behaviour and conduct’. The single most frequent comment I get from younger college learners is how they respect their teachers because they treat them like adults. Hopefully colleges will score highly here.

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From left: Elliot Hall, Rowan Dewsbery and Conor Willmott

All three? You wooden believe it!

Three carpentry students from West Suffolk College took first, second and third places in a national joinery competition.

Competing at the Worshipful Company of Joiners and Ceilers event in London this month, the learners beat more than 20 students from different colleges who were all tasked with making a traditional wooden sash window from drawings.

The competition has never seen all three

top places taken by students from the same college.

The winners were level three carpentry learners Rowan Dewsbery, aged 19, in first place, Elliot Hall, 20, in second place and Conor Willmott, 18.

Brian Turner, lecturer in wood trades at West Suffolk, said: "I am so proud of our students. They are all excellent carpenters and joiners and I expect them to go on to great careers after winning this honour."

College project for Philippines raises £5k



From left: Clark Alltoft, Maria Meredith, Josh Doidge, Tim, Eleanor Ford and Kheamah Powell

South Gloucestershire and Stroud College (SGS) students taking part in a project designed to help those in need in the Philippines have raised more than £5,000.

The learners from courses across the college have been getting ready for the trip of a lifetime by raising the funds during this academic year through events such as bake and jumble sales, bag-packing and performances.

Now in its fourth year, the 18-day college project involves the students working in the

Philippine Community Fund School (PCF), and also at drop-in and reintegration centres run by three other charities which support street children.

Health and social care learner Billie Rogers, aged 18, was part of the project last year and is returning for her second year. "Working with PCF and other charities is a great opportunity for someone lacking in self-confidence such as myself to break out of their shell by committing to helping those less fortunate," she said.

Lecturer's Everest challenge for stillbirth cause

College lecturer Bill Fowler didn't rest in his bid to raise funds for a cause close to his heart as he cycled more than 166 miles in under 12 hours on North Wales's steepest mountain, writes Billy Camden.

There was no rest North Shropshire College lecturer Bill Fowler as he took on the Horseshoe Pass 12-hour Everesting Challenge raise more than £500 for a learner.

It was done in the name of level three animal management student Cerian Cowley, aged 21, who suffered a stillbirth in February and has since been on a fundraising mission for her charity Willow's Wishes.

Named after Cerian's stillborn baby, the charity aims to provide more cuddle cots, which allow bereaved parents to spend time with their stillborn child, at the Wrexham Maelor hospital where she gave birth.

Cerian's family friend and course lecturer, Laura Pugh, approached engineering lecturer Bill to help with the fundraising. She said without the cot "Willow would have been placed in the mortuary away from family and friends".

Bill said: "You can imagine the upset it [the stillborn] caused. It is awful, I couldn't



Bill Fowler

Below, from left: Laura Pugh and Cerian Cowley



think of anything more traumatic."

Keen cyclist Bill completed the Everesting challenge, which involves choosing a hill and cycling up and down it enough times to gain enough vertical height to make a total of 8,848 metres (the height of Mount Everest) on North East Wales's Horseshoe Pass. It is the biggest mountain climb in North Wales in terms of height gain.

"Physically it was hard. I was caught in a

headwind throughout the day which didn't really help but I think it is more of a mental challenge," said Bill.

"You're literally riding a loop and once I had gone up and down for the fourteenth time I started to recognise things like a bit of litter in the hedge road. It all started to seem awfully familiar but not in a terribly good way. It was like being in a hamster wheel."

But when times got tough, Bill set his mind on what was really important.

"In that situation you've just got to press on and think about the cause it was for," he said.

"I think cycling is one of those disciplines where the pros talk about "learning to suffer", which sounds very dramatic, but you learn to just think about other things and for me it was thinking about Willow's Wishes."

Cerian said: "We are all very proud of Bill and what he has achieved, with raising money, his help, generosity and completing a new personal achievement."

He thanked all those who came along and supported him, including Laura and fellow North Shropshire College animal lecturer Jenna Motley.

Laura said: "I was there to support Bill all the way and being at the finish line was emotional not only to see Bill achieve a personal challenge but to be so selfless and help raise

money for a friend of mine who has been through such a heart breaking ordeal. Bill you are a super star."

Visit www.indiegogo.com/projects/willow-s-wishes#/story to donate to Willow's Wishes.

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&

MOVERS
SHAKERS

Your weekly guide
to who's new and
who's leaving

Farnborough College of Technology principal Christine Slaymaker has announced her retire next academic year.

She has been at the college for nearly 15 years and will stay in post until the appointment of the new principal to allow a planned and smooth transition.

“I have been truly privileged to be able to serve the communities of North Hampshire and North West Surrey for the last 15 or so years,” said Ms Slaymaker, who was given a CBE for services to FE in the Queen’s Birthday honours last year.

“I have enjoyed all my time with the college and I pay tribute to the hard working, diligent and professional staff who have achieved so much in terms of national accolades and plaudits but also for each and every individual learner who studies with us. It is undoubtedly the case that without them, I could not have enjoyed such a rewarding career.”

No date has been set for the appointment of Ms Slaymaker’s successor other than 2015/16.

Governors’ board chair Professor Martin Earwicker said: “The college has been most fortunate in having such an outstanding leader as Christine. All of us — governors, staff and students past and present — wish to extend our thanks to Christine for all she has achieved and to wish her every happiness for the future. The governors have started the difficult job of finding a worthy successor.”

And a new principal is set to take over at Newcastle Sixth Form College, which is a division of Newcastle College Group (NCG).

Gerard Garvey is currently principal at Barnsley Sixth Form College but will succeed Steve Gibson at Newcastle in August. He will also take up a position as a

member of the NCG executive board.

“My focus will be on making Newcastle Sixth Form College the preferred A-level choice of study for young people in the region by developing quality and working to guarantee that learners achieve the highest success rates and make exceptional progress,” said Mr Garvey.

Joe Docherty, NCG chief executive, said: “Gerard is an experienced leader, who has achieved outstanding success rates and highly responsive partnership work with schools, learners and parents.”

Meanwhile, the new chief executive of the 157 Group is to be tax expert and public private relationships adviser Ian Pretty, currently a senior vice president for public sector at Capgemini UK.

He is due to take up the post on September 7 when current executive director Dr Lynne Sedgmore retires after seven years leading the 157 Group.

Mr Pretty’s previous roles include director of strategy at HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and director of strategy at the Cabinet Office.

Sarah Robinson, 157 Group chair and principal of Stoke on Trent College, said: “Having held a number of senior positions in both central government and the commercial sector, Ian brings a wide range of skills and experience to the group as we continue our influential work to raise the profile and importance of FE and skills.”

His appointment follows Dr Sedgmore’s retirement announcement in February, bringing an end to her 35 years in the sector. Mr Pretty was not available for comment.



Christine Slaymaker



Gerard Garvey



Steve Gibson



Ian Pretty

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Applicants will have a good understanding of credit based learning and of key developments

in the national training and education sector as well as experience of working in a competitive sales team. Based in Wakefield, West Yorkshire and requiring travel throughout the region and nationally.

Qualifications Development Officer £30k - £32k
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The closing date for all applications is Monday 6th July 2015, with interviews taking place on Thursday 23rd July 2015.

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Salary £32,142 - £36,162 per annum pro rata

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Closing date: 9am on Monday 6 July 2015

Interviews: Wednesday 15 July 2015

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Salary £32,142 - £36,162 per annum

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Closing date: 9am on Monday 6 July 2015

Interviews: Friday 17 July 2015

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Closing date: 9am on Monday 6 July 2015

Interviews: TBC

For further details and to apply for one of the above posts please contact Jo Turner on: jturner@wmcollege.ac.uk

Or please download further details and an application pack from our website: www.wmcollege.ac.uk

When you have completed your application you can email it to: jturner@wmcollege.ac.uk

or send it by post to: Jo Turner, Working Men's College, 44 Crowndale Road, NW1 1TR



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Principal Joni Cunningham, B.Ed (Hons), MA

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Contact Dawit Asress, Head of Curriculum (Business, Professional & Employability) for further information on these post(s).

To apply complete the application form on our website and send to:

Debby Venner, Customer Service and Staffing Team Leader, debby.venner@redbridge-iae.ac.uk

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Job Reference Number: ML/06.15

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Closing Date for all Applications: Friday 03 July 2015

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The ideal candidate will need to possess a good First Degree in Maths, or a degree containing a substantial Maths component or equivalent. Possess a recognised full teaching qualification. Possess knowledge of AS and A2 Further Maths curriculum and have experience of delivering both.

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Please send your CV along with a covering letter outlining why you feel that this opportunity is right for you to: hr-team@aspresussex.org.uk or by post to HR Department, Aspire Sussex Ltd, Crawley Adult Education Centre, Ifield Community College, Crawley Avenue, Crawley, R11 0DB. The closing date for applications is 4pm, July 3rd 2015 and interviews are planned for Monday 13 and Wednesday 15 July.

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FE Week Sudoku challenge

How to play: Fill in all blank squares making sure that each row, column and 3 by 3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9

Spot the difference
to WIN an FE Week mug



7		5			6		9
9				8	5		
				7		1	
					7	9	
			6	1	3		
	2	8					
	4		9				
		6		2			8
8		7			3		2

Difficulty:
EASY

6						9	3
			8		6		
	3				5		4
		2	9	7			3
			1		2		
	9			6	4	1	
3			5				8
		8			1		
5	4						7

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Solutions:
Next week

Last Week's solutions

1	6	8	5	3	9	7	2	4
9	5	4	6	7	2	8	3	1
2	3	7	1	8	4	5	6	9
7	8	3	9	5	1	6	4	2
6	1	5	2	4	8	3	9	7
4	9	2	3	6	7	1	5	8
8	2	6	4	1	5	9	7	3
5	4	1	7	9	3	2	8	6
3	7	9	8	2	6	4	1	5

Difficulty:
EASY

6	5	1	4	2	7	8	9	3
2	7	4	8	9	3	6	5	1
8	3	9	6	1	5	2	7	4
1	6	2	9	7	8	4	3	5
4	8	3	1	5	2	7	6	9
7	9	5	3	6	4	1	2	8
3	1	7	5	4	6	9	8	2
9	2	8	7	3	1	5	4	6
5	4	6	2	8	9	3	1	7

Difficulty:
MEDIUM



Spot five differences. First correct entry wins an FE Week mug. Text your name and picture of your completed spot the difference to 07969 166 374.

Last week's spot the difference winner was Janet Farr (pictured right), chief executive of Community Learning in Partnership (Clip), in Market Rasen, Lincolnshire.

